Black Gold: A History of the Role of Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria, 1850-70

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Statement of Authorship

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which the author has qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement in the main text and bibliography of the thesis.

Signed: David 'Fred' Cahir

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this thesis is to reconstruct the history of Aboriginal people and gold mining in what is now known as Victoria, from 1850-1870. For example, it will examine the involvement of Aboriginal people in gold mining, and the impact of gold mining on Aboriginal communities in non-gold-mining areas.

One of the key aims in this study is to establish the place, role and contribution of Aboriginal people to economic sectoral history, specifically Victorian Aboriginal involvement in the gold mining industry sector, 1850-1870. Clark and Cahir[1] have demonstrated that the history of Aboriginal involvement in Victoria's gold mining history is under-researched and poorly known. Their brief historical review of the available literature on Aboriginal themes has exposed enough material to demonstrate that the exclusion of Aboriginal voices from the story of the Victorian goldfields is not due to a dearth of available information. Moreover it highlights four common misconceptions surrounding Aboriginal people on the goldfields of Victoria which have arguably proved to be groundless: These misconceptions are:

- that most Aboriginal people were attached to pastoral stations, rather than townships
- that those few at mining settlements were on the periphery
- that those on the periphery were bewildered spectators
- that Aboriginal experiences on the goldfields were primarily negative.

The rationale for this research is twofold: firstly to contribute to the reversal of the fragmentary and non-comprehensive historical image of Aboriginal people on the

[1] I Clark and D Cahir, "Aboriginal People, Gold and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria," Tourism, Culture and Communication 4 (2003).

goldfields of Victoria and secondly, recording a study of Aboriginal people from an empirical perspective.

This thesis examines the accommodative responses of Aboriginal people to the Victorian gold rushes through primary and secondary sources and reveals an emerging picture which places Aboriginal people not on the periphery of the gold epoch, but often firmly ensconced in the social and economic milieu that was the gold rush. This study is a positive (and substantive) revisionist perspective of Aboriginal people and the Victorian gold rush.

The findings of this study reveal that Victorian Aboriginal people figured significantly in the gold epoch, their involvement ranging from passive presence, active discovery, to shunning the goldfields. A great degree of Aboriginal agency has been highlighted. Striking and consistent evidence is presented which demonstrates that many Aboriginal people remained in the gold areas, participated in gold mining and interacted with non-Indigenous people in a whole range of hitherto neglected ways, whilst maintaining many of their traditional customs. Moreover, I offer compelling evidence that the Aboriginal presence on the goldfields was a reflection of their entrepreneurial spirit and eagerness to participate in gold-mining or related activities. How the Victorian gold mining societies acculturated a number of Aboriginal cultural features is one of the more intriguing issues revealed in this study that has received very little attention from historians, yet provides a nexus to reconciliation through the process of sharing histories. This is a radical new paradigm that sets out to rudely dispel the circular history that Aboriginal people on the goldfields of Victoria were a passive remnant exerting no influence on one of the great epochs in Australian and world history.

INTRODUCTION

This research project will be the first systematic study of the history of Aboriginal people and gold mining in Victoria. It will show that this history is a rich and varied narrative. Some of the key thematic questions that this study will address are

- What responses did Aboriginal people make to the environmental degradation and social disruption brought by gold mining?
- To what extent did Aboriginal people engage in prospecting, employment, trade and commerce opportunities?
- How much acknowledgement of expertise and knowledge in the discovery of gold can be attributed to Aboriginal people?
- What type of relationships did Aboriginal people have with non-Indigenous miners?
- How did Aboriginal people in non-auriferous areas respond to the socio-economic changes that emanated from the gold rush period?

This research thesis has national significance in that it will be the first major historical study that will examine and recognise the magnitude of Aboriginal involvement in the gold mining sector of Victoria. It is important to note that this research project comes at a critical time in the on-going and heated debates between historians about Australian racial 'history wars'. Consequently, it is envisaged this research program shall contribute to the history discipline, the eco-tourism heritage industry and the reconciliation process by:

- positioning Aboriginal labour history into the framework of mainstream workers' history
- contesting histories that have relied on uncorroborated received dogma rather than rigorous research
- providing a potential starting point for the mammoth task of putting together specific Aboriginal economic sectoral histories into a multi-volume economic history of Aboriginal involvement in Australia's economic and labour history
- adding a substantial contribution to the specific field of labour history in Victoria, Victoria's gold historiography, and opening a rich vein for future similar investigation in other states
- significantly contributing to the development of a full and nuanced historical understanding of Aboriginal labour in Victoria
- helping redress the general neglect that labour historians have demonstrated in their coverage of the Aboriginal experiences of work
- providing a major information resource that will be available for Victoria's Indigenous community, the research project's industry partner: *Sovereign Hill,* the goldfields heritage industry at large, and the wider community.

Some of the difficulties of writing Aboriginal history as a non-Indigenous person have been highlighted,[2] and the question has been asked: 'whose set of 'truths' continue to perpetuate within a society dominated by the power of non-Aboriginal voices and interests.'[3] However the necessity for non-Indigenous people to recognize and confront their own place and role in the history of inter-racial relations is becoming

[2] J Critchett, "'Come on in the Water's Fine' the Ethics of Writing Nineteenth Century Aboriginal Biographies," Tasmanian Historical Studies 5.2 (1997).
[3] T Anderson, "The Aboriginal Experiment: European Racial Discourse and Practice in Gippsland, Victoria, 1860-1895," ANU, 1997. p.6

ever more important in the current political climate. One of the problems in writing a history such as this is the sensitivity surrounding the appropriate choice of terminology and spelling conventions. Conflicts have arisen between conforming to the standardisations of the History Discipline and a desire to accommodate the wishes of the Indigenous communities in the geographical area of this study. The absence of trained linguists in the non-Indigenous communities during the early colonisation period and the gold rush period has resulted in a considerable divergence of opinion over the nomenclature and spelling derivatives surrounding the Indigenous people living in what is now known as Victoria. Clark's exhaustive survey of the literature[4] has resulted in a great deal of much needed nomenclature standardisation in this area and subsequently I have used Clark as a reference point for spatial distribution, clan nomenclature, tribal boundaries and spelling thereof. Clark's reconstruction of tribal boundaries has been preferred to Tindale's[5] as Barwick[6] and Clark[7] clearly demonstrate the deficiencies inherent in some of Tindale's interpretations of Victorian data. Where the historical evidence makes it possible, this study will cite the clan and or the language group's name. Because there is historical evidence that Aboriginal people from Tasmania, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia were present on the Victorian goldfields it will not automatically be assumed that Aboriginal people referred to in a specific locality are from that region's language group. However, where there is no explicit evidence to suggest otherwise, it shall be assumed that Aboriginal people referred to by non-Indigenous observers are located

[4] I Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria (Melbourne: Monash University, 1990).
[5] N Tindale, Aboriginal Tribes of Australia (Canberra: ANU, 1974).
[6] D Barwick, "Mapping the Past: An Atlas of Victorian Clans 1835-1904," Aboriginal History 8 (1984).
[7] I Clark, Place Names and Tenure ~ Windows into Aboriginal Landscapes: Essays in Victorian Aboriginal History (Clarendon: Heritage Matters, 1998), Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria.

on their tribal estates and shall be referred to by their language group name. The term non-Indigenous (rather than "whites") has been used, when writing about the multi-racial goldfields, as the term 'whites' or English would be misleading.

Maps delineating boundaries between the language groups in the study area along with significant places related to the text are interspersed throughout, as are Aboriginal and non-Indigenous artworks and photographs, which support and validate the discussion in this study. The journals, letters and reminiscences of miners held in the State Library of Victoria and the National Library of Australia were particularly valuable to this thesis as were a number of newspapers of the period.

In the 1960s Australian historians were criticised for being the 'high priests' of a cult of forgetfulness, for neglecting Aboriginal history, and for excluding a segment of the landscape from their research.[8] The same criticisms may be levelled at the historical study of Victoria's goldfields history, despite the richness of the Aboriginal side of the goldfields story. This view is supported by Goodman, who emphasises that the historiography of gold 'has left out a great deal'. It is only in recent decades that the history from the other side of the frontier has begun to be written; however Goodman comments that 'from the point of the view of the Indigenous peoples ... the gold rushes have never been susceptible to triumphal interpretations'.[9]

The exclusion of Aboriginal voices from the historical discourse of the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s is analogous to the wider exclusion of Aboriginal people from Australian historical writing. This inattention to Aboriginal people within Australian history was explained by WEH Stanner in his 1968 Boyer Lecture to be a structural matter, a view from a window that had been carefully placed to exclude a whole

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[8] WEH Stanner, After the Dreaming Black and White Australians – An Anthropologists View (Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, 1969).

[9] D Goodman, Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1994). p.14

quadrant of the landscape. Aboriginal people were not included because they were not in the eye of vision, but 'out of sight' and 'out of mind'.[10]

ABORIGINAL PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC SECTORS

Essential to understanding the nature and history of contact between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal people is an awareness of what activities and industries brought the non-indigenes to the frontier. Aboriginal people did not have contact with an entity called 'Western society' as such, but with certain sections of it. However, these did not consist of isolated individuals acting independently; rather their commonality sprang from their shared capitalist and colonialist ideologies.[11] The non-Indigenous commonality also emanated from their interventionist relationships with Aboriginal people.

The crux of colonial expansion and subsequent intervention on Aboriginal society hinged upon British industrial capitalism. Naturally, the manifestations of the intervention differed in significant ways according to their different reasons for being on the frontier, their various labour and resource needs, the scale of their ecological and social impacts, the range and scale of economic activities (squatters, sealers, explorers, missionaries, miners, shop-keepers, farmers or traders) and the various policies, philosophies, beliefs and practices of the individuals at the very face of the frontier. Some historians[12] have only recently come to view Aboriginal people as

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[10] WEH Stanner, (ABC, Sydney) n.p

[11] In this context I am speaking solely in reference to the dominant English colonialist powers, not other non-Anglo minorities such as the Chinese and other etnic groups.

[12] J Beckett, "The Torres Strait Islanders and the Pearling Industry: A Case of Internal Colonialism," Aboriginal History 1.1 (1977), P Brock, "Pastoral Stations and Reserves in South and Central Australia, 1850s-1950s," Labour History 69 (1995), R Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers," Australian Historical Studies 26.103 (1994), R Broome, "Enduring Moments of Aboriginal Dominance: Aboriginal Performers, Boxers and Runners," Labour History 69 (1995), Clark and Cahir,

conscious actors, as active participants in Australia's economic history, rather than as mere victims of non-Indigenes, or pawns in another culture's game. Consensus amongst historians on this matter is non-existent. As recently as 1998, Jim Hagen and Robert Castles argued that Aboriginal involvement in the non-Indigenous economy was minimal and that their motivation was primarily externally driven. Hagen and Castles insist that Aboriginal people predominately did not seek to involve themselves in the colonialist's economy and that 'More usually Aboriginal people neither sought nor were given the opportunity to adapt or to participate in the white economy.'[13]

"Aboriginal People, Gold and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria.", PA Clarke, "The Significance of Whales to the Aboriginal People of Southern South Australia," Records of the South Australian Museum 34.1 (2001), J Connell and R Howitt, Mining and Indigenous Peoples in Australasia (Melbourne: Sydney University Press, 1991), P Corris, Lords of the Ring: A History of Prize Fighting in Australia (Sydney: 1980), D Cousins and J Nieuwenhuysen, Aboriginals and the Mining Industry (Sydney: Committee for Economic Development of Australia, 1979), A Curthoys and C Moore, "Working for the White People," Labour History 69 (1995), R Dixon, "Aborigines as Purposive Actors or Passive Victims: An Account of the Argyle Events by Some of the Aboriginal Participants," Aboriginals and Diamond Mining, eds. R Dixon and M Dillon (Nedlands: U.W.A, 1990), R Dixon and M Dillon, eds., Aborigines and Diamond Mining (Nedlands: UWA Press, 1990), B Egloff, "'Sea Long Stretched between': Perspectives of Aboriginal Fishing on the South Coast of New South Wales in the Light of Mason V Tritton," Aboriginal History 24.1 (2000), M Fels, Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District, 1837-1853. (Melbourne: MUP, 1988), R Foster, "Rations, Co-Existence, and the Colonisation of Aboriginal Labour in the South Australian Pastoral Industry," Aboriginal History 24.1 (2000), R Hall, Black Diggers (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), A Hamilton, ""Blacks and Whites: The Relationships of Change"," Arena 30.2 (1972), S Hodson, "Nyungars and Work: Aboriginal Experiences in the Rural Economy of the Great Southern Region of Western Australia," Aboriginal History 17.1 (1993), MA Jebb, Blood Sweat and Welfare (Perth: UWA, 2002), D May, From Bush to Station: Aboriginal Labour in the North Queensland Pastoral Industry 1861-1897 (Townsville: UQP, 1983), I Mattingly and K Hampton, Survival in Our Own Land: 'Aboriginal' Experiences in 'South Australia' since 1836 (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1988), A McGrath, 'Born in the Cattle': Aborigines in Cattle Country (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), A McGrath and K Saunders, "Aboriginal Workers," Labour History 69.Special Edition (1995), M McKenna, Looking for Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History of Place (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), FR Morris, "Aborigines' Contribution to Australia's War Effort," Aboriginal History 16.1 (1992), S Murray-Smith, "Beyond the Pale: The Islander Communities of Bass Strait in the 19th Century," Tasmanian Historical Association Papers and Proceedings 20.4 (1973), M Parsons, "The Tourist Corroboree in South Australia," Aboriginal History 21.1 (1997), A Pope, "Aboriginal Adaptation to Early Colonial Labour Markets: The South Australian Experience," Labour History 54.1 (1988), H Reynolds, With the White People: The Crucial Role of Aborigines in the Exploration and Development of Australia (Ringwood: Penguin, 1990), P Rogers, The Industrialists and the Aborigines: A Study of Aboriginal Employment in the Australian Mining Industry (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973), P Smith, "Station Camps: Legislation, Labour Relations and Rations on Pastoral Leases in the Kimberley Region, Western Australia," Aboriginal History 24.1 (2000), F Stevens, Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry (Canberra: Australian National University, 1974), Public Records Office of Victoria, Tracking the Native Police, 2006, C Williams and B Thorpe, Aboriginal Workers and Managers: History, Emotional and Community Labour and Occupational Health and Safety in South Australia (Henley Beach: Seaview Press, 2003).

[13] R Castle and J Hagan, "Settlers and the State: The Creation of an Aboriginal Workforce in Australia," Aboriginal History 22.1 (1998). p.25

Historian Henry Reynolds[14] was one of the first and most prominent scholars to repudiate this non-participatory paradigm at a macro level. Reynolds was largely responsible for activating discussion on the economic relationships Aboriginal people developed with the white colonisers. The subsequent historical research at a micro or regional level has invariably revealed that the nature of Aboriginal culture and the responses they made to the colonisers not only influenced the nature of non-Indigenous colonisation[15] but also was consistent with the Aboriginals' own cultural imperatives. R Dixon, in his study *Aborigines and Diamond Mining* noted: 'Aborigines attempted to respond to and influence events and outcomes in a manner premised on and consonant with Aboriginal cultural requirements.'[16]

Arguably, one of the critical factors that have greatly hampered a more balanced representation of Aboriginal peoples's involvement and influence in colonial Australia's economic history is how non-Indigenous writers and historians have portrayed them as workers. Richard Broome has argued that the Aboriginal people have often been depicted as lazy or indifferent workers.[17] Historians Ann Curthoys and Clive Moore have argued that the first step any history of Aboriginal labour must take is to 'come to terms with the popular racist assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders did not work'.[18] In recent years, evidence has been accumulating of some disenchantment with the paradigm that has governed the

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[14] See Reynolds, With the White People: The Crucial Role of Aborigines in the Exploration and Development of Australia.

[15] See Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers.", B Blaskett, "The Aboriginal Response to White Settlement in the Port Phillip District, 1835-1850," Masters, Melbourne University, 1979, B Attwood, ed., A Life Together, a Life Apart. A History of Relations between Europeans and Aborigines (Melbourne: MUP, 1994), M Brown, The Black Eureka (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1976), I Clark, ed., Sharing History (Canberra: AIATSIC, 1994), Foster, "Rations, Co-Existence, and the Colonisation of Aboriginal Labour in the South Australian Pastoral Industry."

[16] Dixon, "Aborigines as Purposive Actors or Passive Victims: An Account of the Argyle Events by Some of the Aboriginal Participants." p.68

[17] Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers." p.202

[18] Curthoys and Moore, "Working for the White People." p.2

interpretation of Aboriginal / non-Indigenous work relations in Australia.[19] Much of this research has focused on the northern frontiers, but increasingly a significant number of studies are focusing on the south-eastern frontiers as well and there is a growing recognition by a number of historians that the use of Aboriginal labour in the south and east had always been greater than historians had hitherto realised. Some brief overviews of a number of economic sectoral histories in relation to Aboriginal people are necessary in order to establish a contextual analysis, and what Clark has termed the 'intellectual pedigree' of this study.[20]

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND THE PASTORAL INDUSTRY

In the past twenty years there have been a considerable number of macro and regional studies undertaken on the Aboriginal involvement in the pastoral-cattle industry during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[21] Judging by the number of published studies, the pastoral-cattle industry has received the most comprehensive assessment of Aboriginal peoples's contribution to the Australian economy and the significance of this involvement. Many of these studies have focused on the northern and arid interior. Those regions were colonized relatively recently and there are substantial and

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[19] Dixon, "Aborigines as Purposive Actors or Passive Victims: An Account of the Argyle Events by Some of the Aboriginal Participants." p.66

[20] I Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria (Ballarat: Ballarat Heritage Services, 2003).

[21] Brock, "Pastoral Stations and Reserves in South and Central Australia, 1850s-1950s.", Foster, "Rations, Co-Existence, and the Colonisation of Aboriginal Labour in the South Australian Pastoral Industry.", Jebb, Blood Sweat and Welfare, May, From Bush to Station: Aboriginal Labour in the North Queensland Pastoral Industry 1861-1897, McGrath and Saunders, "Aboriginal Workers.", Reynolds, With the White People: The Crucial Role of Aborigines in the Exploration and Development of Australia, H Reynolds, Black Pioneers (Ringwood: Penguin, 2000), Smith, "Station Camps: Legislation, Labour Relations and Rations on Pastoral Leases in the Kimberley Region, Western Australia." Some studies have examined the labour relations of Aboriginal people in the pastoral industry during more recent times. See: B Hardy, Lament for the Barkindji, the Vanished Tribes of the Darling River Region (Sydney: Alpha Books, 1981), Hodson, "Nyungars and Work: Aboriginal Experiences in the Rural Economy of the Great Southern Region of Western Australia."

easily accessible sources from which to draw for research. Notably, there are few historical studies of Aboriginal work patterns within the Victorian economy, or micro studies which map Aboriginal contribution to the Victorian pastoral industry.[22] This gap in Victorian Aboriginal historiography is surprising. In the historical records, there are obvious corollaries between the northern frontier experiences and the earlier Victorian colonial frontier in relation to Aboriginal peoples's sustained involvement in and significant contribution to the pastoral industry. This memory loss presents a number of conundrums to the researcher. For example - why has the Victorian Aboriginal contribution to the pastoral industry been overlooked? And what are the implications for other economic sectoral studies such as Aboriginal people and gold mining, here abbreviated as *Black Gold*?

Discussion of Aboriginal pastoral workers in the northern parts of Australia has been significant, yet far from exhaustive, as only a small number of regional or micro studies have been undertaken in Queensland. Victoria, by comparison is bereft. This historical blind spot cannot be explained away by assertions such as the numerical insignificance of Victorian Aborigines, the lack of available records, or non-participation by Aboriginal people in the capitalist economy. Historical records[23] clearly demonstrate that the pastoral industry spread rapidly in Victoria and that Aboriginal expertise was widely valued and utilized. Moreover, pastoralism was

[22] See: Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers.", J Penney, "Murrundi Aborigines and Murray Squatters," Victorian Historical Journal 60 (1989).

[23] See: TF Bride, ed., Letters from Victorian Pioneers (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1898). I Clark, ed., The Journals of GA Robinson, Jan.1839-Sept.1840 (Melbourne: Heritage Matters, 1998). R Therry, Reminiscences of Thirty Years Residence in New South Wales, Fascimilie ed. (Sydney: SUP, 1974). S Mossman and T Bannister, Australia, Visited and Revisited (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1974). For further discussion on the 'indispensable' nature of Aboriginal people in the Victorian pastoral industry see chapter on 'off the goldfields'.

undoubtedly the major impact on traditional Aboriginal lifestyles and was immediately assimilated to some degree into their labour and trade economies.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND MINING

The dearth of economic sectoral study on 'mining and Aboriginal people' becomes apparent upon consultation of select bibliographies. In Diane Barwick's expansive *A Select Bibliography of Aboriginal History and Social Change: Theses and Published Research to 1976*, there are only four titles which specifically address the subject of Aboriginal people and mining.[24] More recently Mel Davies (1997) has compiled a bibliography of published works on mining in Australia[25] but no substantial historical research has been published devoted to the role of Aboriginal people in the mining industry for southern Australia,[26] and only a handful of trained historians have published studies which examine Aboriginal people and mining in northern Australia.[27] This is surprising given that there is evidence in a number of regions[28]

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[24] See: *Diggers and Doggers: parallel failures in economic acculturation (1972); The Cape York Aluminium Companies and the Native Peoples (1976); The Industrialists and the Aborigines (1973); 'The Aborigines'* in *Mining in Australia (1975) in* D Barwick, M Mace and T Stannage, eds., Handbook for Aboriginal and Islander History (Canberra: Aboriginal History, 1979).

[25] M Davies, A Bibliography of Australian Mining History (Nedlands: University of Western Australia, 1997).

[26] Robyne Bancroft's brief study of Aboriginal involvement in a northern New South Wales goldfield has been the most southern historical study which the researcher has been able to locate. See R Bancroft, "Aboriginal Miners and the Solferino and Lionsville Goldfields of Northern New South Wales," A World Turned Upside Down: Cultural Change on Australia's Goldfields 1851 - 2001, eds. Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming (Canberra: ANU, 2001).

[27] L Gibbs, "Decolonising, Multiplicities and Mining in the Eastern Goldfields, Western Australia," Australian Geographical Studies 41.1 (2003), Connell and Howitt, Mining and Indigenous Peoples in Australasia, Cousins and Nieuwenhuysen, Aboriginals and the Mining Industry, Dixon, "Aborigines as Purposive Actors or Passive Victims: An Account of the Argyle Events by Some of the Aboriginal Participants.", Dixon and Dillon, eds., Aborigines and Diamond Mining, Reynolds, With the White People: The Crucial Role of Aborigines in the Exploration and Development of Australia.

[28] Reynolds, Black Pioneers, G Blainey, The Rush That Never Ended, Fifth ed. (Melbourne: MUP, 2003), M Webb and A Webb, Golden Destiny: The Centenary History of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia (Kalgoorlie: Kalgoorlie-Boulder Shire, 1993), Bancroft, "Aboriginal Miners and the Solferino and Lionsville Goldfields of Northern New South Wales.", N Keesing, ed., History of the Australian Gold Rushes (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1971), T Miles,

that one of the economic initiatives that Aboriginal people grasped was mining. Historian Stuart MacIntyre contends that mining was another economic sector where there are several examples of Aboriginal initiatives.[29]

One of the reasons why sectoral histories on mining and Aboriginal people are not well represented in the literature (judging by what historian Henry Reynolds argues) may be that their influence and involvement in the mining industry was only significant on small and very isolated mining fields, unlike the pastoral or maritime economic sectors where Aboriginal involvement was pivotal.[30]

Judging from micro studies of Aboriginal employment in the mining sector by a number of historians, it would appear that Reynolds's largely dismissive view of Aboriginal involvement in mining may not stand up to close scrutiny, as there is a body of evidence that clearly some northern Australian fields could not have been explored or exploited without the use of Aboriginal labour and knowledge.[31] Whether Reynolds's analysis can be substantiated for southern Australia has yet to be tested.

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

The systematic study of history as a discipline is a relatively recent phenomenon, far in arrears of say mathematics or the natural sciences. Nineteenth century historians dealt largely with governments and great men, and with the development of national consciousness and the growth of political liberalism. Most historical writings of this

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"The Discovery of Gold in Australia," The Mining Magazine.June (1954), P Playford, "Discovery of the Kimberley Goldfield," Royal W.A Historical Society 9.3 (1985).

[29] D Borchardt, ed., Australia: A Historical Library (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987). p.16

[30] Reynolds, Black Pioneers. p.96-7

[31] D Elias, "*Jukurrpa* - Golden Dreams," Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia, eds. Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (cambridge: CUP, 2001), Blainey, The Rush That Never Ended, R Coningsby, The Discovery of Gold (London: William Milligan, 1895), Playford, "Discovery of the Kimberley Goldfield."

period reflect the belief that the demise of Aboriginal peoples was inevitable and necessary. Alexander Sutherland, a historian of Victoria in 1888 structured his narrative in a manner that applauded colonisation as a 'distinct step in human progress' which by necessity had sacrificed 'a few thousands of an inferior race'.[32] Attwood argues that Western constructs of race, Christian ideology and the development of Social Darwinism have all been critical in the construction of images of Aboriginal people in Australia.[33]

The shape and content of history varied, naturally, according to the methods and materials available to the historian, as did the entire emphasis in which it was written. The relationship between power, racism and history in Australian historical writing is clearly illustrated by many historians including Attwood[34] and more recently Manne[35], MacIntyre[36] and Windschuttle[37]. The recent debate between historians and commentators which has spilled over into the mainstream is evidence that the writing of Aboriginal history has rarely been free of political implications, even when it meant disremembering and mythologising. The literature reveals and reinforces the changing hues of dominant social and political ideas, especially relating to race and colonialism. Whether the history of Indigenous Australians was being lamented, rationalised, challenged or revised, it has been inevitably shaped by the cultural

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[32] A Sutherland, Victoria and Its Metropolis: Past and Present (Melbourne: Macarron Bird, 1888). p.5. For further discussion see Tom Griffiths in P Russell and R White, eds., Pastiche: Reflections on Nineteenth Century Australia (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994). p. 10

[33] See B Attwood, The Making of the Aborigines (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989).

[34] B Attwood, ed., In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996).

[35] R Manne, ed., Whitewash: On Keith Windscuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History (Melbourne`: Schwartz, 2003).

[36] S Macintyre and A Clark, The History Wars (Melbourne: MUP, 2003).

[37] K Windschuttle, Doctored Evidence and Invented Incidents in Aboriginal Historiography, 2003, http://www.sydneyline.com, The Sydney Line, 18 November 2003.

perceptions of its authors, who have predominately come from western backgrounds and intellectual traditions. Curthoys points out:

> Australia provides an excellent illustration of Foucault's point that racial discourse typically suffers rupture, recovery and transformation, appearing 'renewed and new at the same time' so that those who analyse it can never decide 'whether they are witness to a legacy of the past or the emergence of a new phenomenon'.[38]

Three distinct periods of white constructions of Indigenous Australians are apparent. Firstly, the nineteenth century, a period of lamenting and rationalising the Aborigines' 'fate'; secondly, the first seven decades of the twentieth century, a period characterised by national memory loss, and thirdly, the 1970s onwards, a largely revisionist period attempting to reconstruct the act of dispossession and the responses made by the dispossessed. In recent years a post-revisionist debate has erupted between historians and commentators which largely focus on analysing the empirical evidence of frontier violence and subsequent constructions of 'black armband histories'. [See Figure 1.1]

[38] R Nile, ed., The Australian Legend and Its Discontents (St Lucia: UQP, 2000). p.35

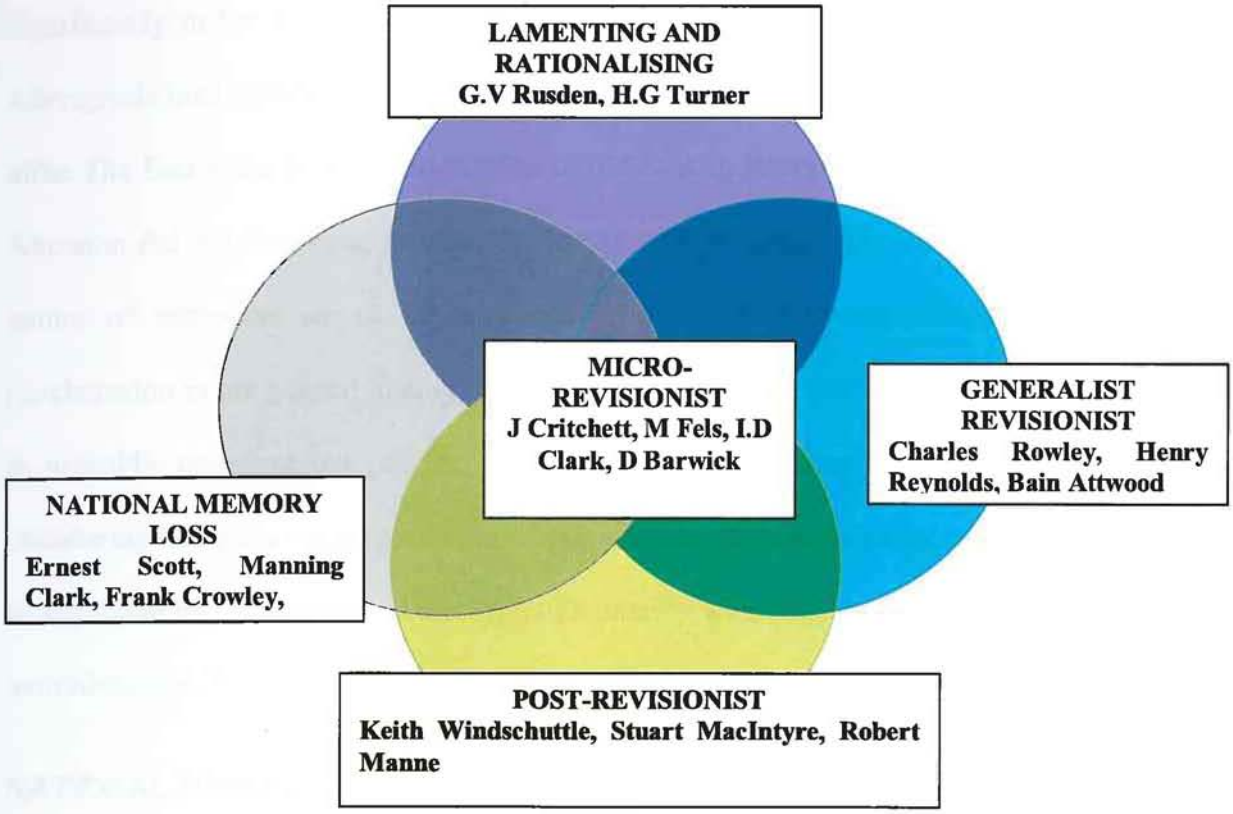

Figure 1.1

Stages of historiography in the depiction of Indigenous peoples in Australian histories with some prominent writers listed for each phase.

LAMENTING AND RATIONALISING

During the early years of colonisation, Aboriginal peoples were objects of intense curiosity and few writers failed to include in their descriptive accounts of the new land some consideration of the customs and mores of its indigenes. Many books were

published specifically about Aboriginal people in the nineteenth century, but importantly the majority of these were written in the latter half of the century and significantly in the 1870s and 1880s when the supposed extinction of Tasmanian Aboriginals (and mainland tribes) attracted the attention of historians and the public alike. *The Last of the Tasmanians* published in1870 is an example of this genre.[39] Attention did not, however, necessarily denote understanding, whether of the basic nature of settlement or of the character of Aboriginal society. H.G Turner's proclamation in his general history of the Colony of Victoria is starker than most but is arguably representative of the rationalising epoch. Turner claimed that the: 'wandering savage to whom persistent labour was an unknown quantity, was doomed to extinction by the progress of that type of humanity with which it was impossible to assimilate him'.[40]

NATIONAL MEMORY LOSS

In 1968, the anthropologist WEH Stanner delivered a landmark lecture titled 'The Great Australian Silence'. Stanner considered the work of Australian historians from the 1930s to the 1960s and commented on the absence of Aboriginal people from mainstream Australian histories. Furthermore, Stanner considered this paucity towards Aborigines and race relations within Australian history was engineered.[41] While a few specialist works dealing with Aboriginal people were published in this period, notably E.J.B Foxcroft's *Australian Native Policy* (1941), Paul Hasluck's *Black Australians* (1942) and Clive Turnbull's *Black War* (1948), there were serious

[39] RB Smyth, The Aborigines of Victoria (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1878), E Curr, The Australian Race (Melbourne: John Ferres, 1886), A Howitt, The Native Tribes of South East Australia (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1904).
[40] HG Turner, A History of the Colony of Victoria (London: Longmans, 1904). p.218
[41] WEH Stanner, The Great Australian Silence (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1968). p.5

deficiencies in the coverage of general histories, and it was common for Indigenous Australians to be totally neglected.[42]

In a similar vein but in more recent times historian Manning Clark declared that his seminal six volume work *A History of Australia* would deal with 'the mighty theme: the coming of civilisation to Australia' and later confessed: 'What does one say about the Aborigines? Perhaps that is another question I should have paid more attention to. Who can tell?'[43] It is apparent the cult of forgetfulness was not extinguished with Stanner's landmark lecture in 1968. Arguably what these historians did was to locate Aboriginal people in what they saw as a static, primitive and 'traditional' past and in so doing silenced them from the changing story of Australian history.

THE REVISIONIST PERIOD

The silence of which Stanner spoke has been shattered by a bevy of writers and scholars who have collectively sharpened Australia's conscience on the nature of post-colonisation Aboriginal histories. Much of the historical renaissance which has occurred since the 1970s has been what historical geographer Ian Clark calls 'demonstrative' histories.[44] Clark argued that it was deemed necessary to react against previous simplistic paradigms about Aboriginal responses to conquest and dispossession. Previously unchallenged paradigms, which had incorporated either an avoidance of the question of racial violence or the belief that Aboriginal responses to colonisation were too inadequate to deserve serious attention, were reworked. The

[42] E Scott, A Short History of Australia (London: OUP, 1916). p.185
[43] M Clark, "Writing a History of Australia," Australian Historical Studies 23.91 (1988). p.168
[44] ID Clark, 'That's my Country Belonging to me'. Aboriginal Land tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria (Ballarat, Ballarat Heritage Press: 2003).

avoidance of the question of racial violence up until the late 1960s was soundly challenged by scholars such as Charles Rowley and Henry Reynolds.

The issue of black and white violence so dominated the revisionist phase of Aboriginal historiography that the old paradigm of peaceful colonisation which drew an image of a passive and static Aboriginal people that allowed non-Indigenes to introduce themselves, their possessions and oppressions was replaced by what Blaskett described as the 'stereotype of frontier violence'.[45] The 'heroic warrior' genre argued that there were Indigenous Australians who were determined, politically organised warriors who waged a war against their white oppressors. The initial works of this renaissance that reminded mainstream Australia that the frontier had been a violent place were sweeping in scope and broad in generalisation.[46] There also tended to be an emphasis on the more recent northern frontiers. The practical import of this scholarship was that 'settlement occasioned mass violence'.

Over-generalisations about frontier conflict, which assumed a uniformity of violence and similarity of resistance, led to a number of historians warning against what historian James Urry[47] called a proliferation of 'blunderbuss' histories which was in danger of overlooking some of the more interesting periods and subjects of Aboriginal history. Australian inter-racial history was until the 1970s generally limited to depicting events through white colonisers' eyes because it was argued that this reflected the rarity of Aboriginal testimony in surviving written records.[48]

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[45] Blaskett, "The Aboriginal Response to White Settlement in the Port Phillip District, 1835-1850." p.7

[46] See L Lippmann, Generations of Resistance (Melbourne: Longman, 1996).; J Roberts, Massacres to Mining (Blackburn: Dove, 1981).; F Robinson and B York, The Black Resistance: An Introduction to the History of the Aborigines Struggle against British Colonialism (Maryborough: Widescope, 1972).

[47] Quoted in Blaskett, "The Aboriginal Response to White Settlement in the Port Phillip District, 1835-1850." p.6

[48] See Tom Griffiths in Russell and White, eds., Pastiche: Reflections on Nineteenth Century Australia. p.11

Moreover, the infiltration of an Aboriginal past into the centre of national stories such as pastoralism, exploration, war and gold was arguably very disturbing for many historians. David Carter, commenting on the nexus he believes has been reached between Aboriginality and Australian modernity describes the implications of revisionist history writing as not simply adding another layer to the nation's history or culture: 'It starts to change the whole picture. The very foundations of earlier stories of the nation seem to be their weakest point: the heroes begin to look like villains, the past begins to leak into the present releasing quite different odours.'[49]

Clark warns that historical discourses that draw conclusions about inter-racial violence on the frontier without assessing the responses of individual clans or individual clan members are in danger of being too simplistic and not contributing fully to our understanding of inter-racial relations on the frontier.[50] One of the main challenges for this research project will be to locate and apply the fine brush strokes of historical detail to a large canvas.

MICRO-REVISIONIST

A number of points can be made about the recovery from memory loss and the reconstruction of an Aboriginal history. Even the term "an Aboriginal history" is potentially misleading as it is strongly suggestive of a non-existent pan-Aboriginal society.[51] Ian Clark, in his 1992 treatise on Aboriginal land tenure and dispossession in the nineteenth century, warned about the necessity of making a distinction between

[49] David Carter in Nile, ed., The Australian Legend and Its Discontents. p.64
[50] Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.4
[51] Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.30

'general' and 'particular' historiographical neglect when referring to the state of Aboriginal history.[52]

This 'general' historical neglect, Clark argues, is no longer a dominant observable feature, though there is in 2006 a surprising propensity for generalist historians to not so much to disremember, but to dismember Aboriginal history into a formularised 'before and after' scenario. That is, there is a tendency to continue to use a primitivist fallacy whereupon historians may emphasise the perfect harmony between a homogenous Aboriginal people and nature in pre-European times and to contrast it with the pathetic sequel. The consequential message is that the fall of a race from ecological and spiritual grace to a physical state ruined by non-Indigene's genocidal policy, disease and sham Christianity is the *only* story and certainly the only theme meriting investigation and reflection.[53]

In 1992 Clark also lamented the absence of explicit Aboriginal tribal histories, though some fine state and regional analyses had been published. A survey of Aboriginal historiography in Victoria reveals that Clark's statement 'Aboriginal history is characterised by an absence of expected 'trickle down' effects from the general renaissance in Aboriginal studies to the field of specific Aboriginal history'[54] is still relevant in 2006. There is however an obvious trend by a small number of historians to research and publish micro-studies of Aboriginal history and some excellent regional analyses have come into the public domain. Most notable of these Victorian micro-studies historians are Diane Barwick,[55] Jan Critchett,[56] Marie Fels[57] and Ian

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[52] Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.30

[53] For a vivid example of this over simplification see: Lippmann, Generations of Resistance. pp.1-11

[54] Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. pp.30-1

[55] Barwick, "Mapping the Past: An Atlas of Victorian Clans 1835-1904.", L Barwick and R Barwick, eds., Rebellion at Coranderrk, vol. Monograph 5 (Canberra: Aboriginal History, 1998).

[56] J Critchett, A Distant Field of Murder; Western District Frontiers 1834-1888 (Melbourne: MUP, 1990).

Clark.[58] The writing and publishing of comprehensive specific Victorian tribal histories has to date still proven to be tantalisingly out of the historian's reach, and in other states too, specific language group histories are extremely rare. The implications of these historiographical deficiencies for this research study are two fold:

- there are sizeable gaps in the secondary sources of identified geographical areas where little exhaustive scholarly research has been carried out in the Aboriginal history discipline

- it is possible that 'new' versions of regional histories which portray Aboriginal involvement in the Victorian goldfields in a way discordant with 'given' Aboriginal roles in regional histories may be negatively received.

POST-REVISIONIST PERIOD

In the last five years there has been the equivalent of a civil war in Aboriginal history circles that has, to a large extent, polarised historians into two camps dubbed 'whitewash' and 'black armband'. The battlelines in what has been termed the 'history wars'[59] revolve essentially around disagreement on the topic of massacres and genocide. Succinctly put, the sometimes fierce arguments centre on historical scholarship rigour, conflicting definitions of what constitutes reliable historical sources, and the subsequent exclusion and inclusion of historical documents in the

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[57] Fels, Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District, 1837-1853.
[58] Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria, Clark and Cahir, "Aboriginal People, Gold and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria."
[59] See Macintyre and Clark, The History Wars.

telling of the inter-racial conflict story. That is to say, there has been, and continues to be, disagreement about the corroboration of sources, the contextual inferences drawn, empiricism as a methodology and the perceived political overtones that are also associated with the 'history wars'.

Competing visions of Australia's history of colonisation are not new, but scholarly debate over competing interpretations has given way in recent years to an extraordinary amount of banal invective and verbal slinging. Academic Keith Windschuttle[60] has opined that a considerable body of evidence existed which contradicted a number of claims that genocide had occurred against Aboriginal peoples in Australia[61] and also that a number of prominent historians had invented the occurrence of a number of Aboriginal massacres. Windschuttle also decries what he considered an over-reliance by some historians on oral history.[62] A multi-authored (including Henry Reynolds and Lyndall Ryan) rebuttal of Windschuttle's assertions came in 2003 whereupon a number of the authors took umbrage with Windschuttle's questioning of sources as credible or not, and also at his assessment of numbers, arguing that he is right to question some of the massacre number claims, but has been less than rigorous himself in the basis for his counter claims.[63]

The salient lessons gained from warring historians for this research project is the imperative to be cautious about axiomatic views, to be vigilantly suspicious of the origin of sources and to view the contextual background as just as important as the source itself.

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[60] K Windschuttle, Doctored Evidence and Invented Incidents in Aboriginal Historiography, 2001, http://www.sydneyline.com, The Sydney Line, 18 November 2003.
[61] A Curthoys, C Tatz, T Barta and D Moses, "'Genocide'?: Australian Aboriginal History in International Perspective," Aboriginal History 25 (2001).
[62] Windschuttle, Doctored Evidence and Invented Incidents in Aboriginal Historiography.p.7
[63] See James Boyce, Henry Reynolds, Lyndall Ryan and Robert Manne in Manne, ed., Whitewash: On Keith Windscuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF AUSTRALIAN GOLD-MINING

In the early 1960s, Geoffrey Blainey's history of Australian mining *The Rush That Never Ended* [64] was published, and whilst Blainey's work is studded with references to Aboriginal people in a number of significant capacities, across the breadth of the continent and in all the critical periods of mining, he neglected to synthesise any broad acknowledgement of their part in the saga of Australian mining, yet includes a chapter on Chinese miners' involvement. There is a tendency for historians and writers discussing West Australian, Queensland and Northern Territory (colony, regional and specific) goldfields to be more inclusive of the Indigenous experience than in Victorian histories, but the Aboriginal presence is still predominately only in the guise of frontier violence, if at all. Indeed, historian Ian Coates contends that Aboriginal people are often absent from European accounts of the discovery and mining of gold in Western Australia and that in Queensland gold histories Aboriginal people are represented as violent or savage spoilers[65] or as bewildered and broken spectators.[66] Occasionally, it is possible to read summations of race relations on the goldfields which stand in stark contrast to the above.[67] Detailed historical studies of specific Aboriginal communities mining and participating in the communal life of goldfields are rare.[68]

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[64] Blainey, The Rush That Never Ended.
[65] D Tweed, Cosmo Howley: A Short History of a Gold Mine (Sydney: Dominion Mining, 1989). pp.35-6
[66] H Holthouse, Gympie Gold (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1999). p.35-47
[67] See: Webb and Webb, Golden Destiny: The Centenary History of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia. I McCalman, ed., Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia (Cambridge: CUP, 2001). Clark and Cahir, "Aboriginal People, Gold and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria."
[68] Bancroft, "Aboriginal Miners and the Solferino and Lionsville Goldfields of Northern New South Wales." p.132 I Clark and D Cahir, Tanderrum (Castlemaine: FOMAD, 2004).

Indeed, a disturbing number of historians have practiced a cult of faithfully and unquestioningly copying the writings of their Eurocentric predecessors.[69] The net effect of this monochromatic photocopy version of history is that much of the arresting high resolution is lost or blurred. The incorrect attribution of gold discoveries to non-Indigenes in Australian gold histories such as the famous 106 pound nugget of gold found near the Turon, invariably referred to as simply "Kerr's Nugget", illustrates how short cuts by historians such as Hodge, Rientis and Carrodus have excised Aboriginal people from Australian gold history.[70] Of more concern is the crudely casual attitude of renowned historians who have resorted to specious scissors and paste prose masquerading as scholarly writing in place of rigorous historical discussion on the subject of Aboriginal people and the advent of gold mining.[71]

Generally, most writers discussing Australian gold mining history, if they do refer to Aboriginal people, restrict their attention solely to the latter part of the twentieth century and almost exclusively on the northern or arid gold-producing regions of Australia.[72] Occasionally, there is a brief discussion about the possible significance gold may have had for Aboriginal people prior to colonization.[73] However, many writers have failed to suggest that Aboriginal people in the nineteenth century did

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[69] See: W Bate, Victorian Gold Rushes (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988). G Serle, The Golden Age - a History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861 (Melbourne: M.U.P., 1963).

[70] G Carrodus, Gold, Gamblers and Sly Grog: Life on the Goldfields, 1851-1900 (Melbourne: OUP, 1981), B Hodge, "Goldrush Australia," Royal Australian Historical Society Journal 69.3 (1983), R Rientis, ed., Gold Fever, Part 38 ed., vol. 3, 7 vols. (Sydney: Hamlyn, 1970). refer to the find as 'Kerr's Hundredweight'.

[71] See: M Clark, A History of Australia, vol. 4 (Melbourne: MUP, 1988).p.6 W Bate, Lucky City (Melbourne: MUP, 1978). Pp.1-4. B Attwood, My Country - a History of the Djadja Wurrung;1837-1864 (Clayton: Monash Publications, 1999). Chapter three.

[72] See Rogers, The Industrialists and the Aborigines: A Study of Aboriginal Employment in the Australian Mining Industry., Cousins and Nieuwenhuysen, Aboriginals and the Mining Industry., Cousins and Nieuwenhuysen, Aboriginals and the Mining Industry., Connell and Howitt, Mining and Indigenous Peoples in Australasia. , R Dixon and M Dillon, Aboriginals and Diamond Mining (Nedlands: U.W.A, 1990). , Gibbs, "Decolonising, Multiplicities and Mining in the Eastern Goldfields, Western Australia." For discussion about mining on Victorian Aboriginal land (Portland) in the 1970s see Roberts, Massacres to Mining.

[73] B Birch, "Gold in Australia," Johnny Greens Journal 9.1 (1988). p.2

come to attach economic or spiritual significance to gold. By this failure these writers effectively locked Aboriginal people into a culturally static past, and disremembered Aboriginal people in the gold rush.[74]

A recent volume on the history of gold in Australia by a team of historians and curators has gone some way to a fresh appraisal of the connection between Aboriginal people and gold mining.[75] However, what particularly marks *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia* from other discussions on racism and gold is their departure from conventional assumptions about gold mining being solely a catalyst for the social and cultural diaspora that occurred amongst Aboriginal nations. It is argued that whilst the racism that Aboriginal people suffered with the advent of goldfields on their land was sustained and extremely oppressive, it did not stymie their active resistance and agency in the industry. Indeed, McCalman notes in the introduction, 'Nowhere do we encounter Indigenes as passive victims of gold' and argues further that the examples of 'extraordinary sagacity, agile resourcefulness' and the harnessing by shrewd indigenes of European compulsions for gold is a beacon to historians that the history of gold and Aboriginal people has been misunderstood.

> We also take away from these stories a strong sense that Australian history cannot be properly understood without the realisation that European and Indigenous peoples have been and remain deeply entangled in the processes and consequences of gold extraction.[76]

Indeed, Goodman alludes to the gold rushes being mythical events in Australian history where dissenting voices (and especially Aboriginal dissenting voices) have not figured prominently. Goodman has argued forcefully that

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[74] See Urry in Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.18

[75] Goodman in McCalman, ed., Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia. p.33

[76] McCalman, ed., Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia. p.16

> Until we see the vigorous, masculine, democratic politics of the 1850s gold-rush period, with its insistent calls for the land to be distributed amongst 'the people', as part of the same story as the taking of Aboriginal land and the breaking up of Aboriginal families and communities – until we see, that is, that the 'black armband' history of Australia and the history of democratic progress in Australia tell the same story from different perspectives – we will not have fully acknowledged the conflict of historical understandings which reconciliation aspires to resolve.[77]

Goodman's persuasive argument about Australian goldfields is equally pertinent when examining Victorian goldfields. it is an extraordinary irony there are many accounts in the miner's correspondence which view Aboriginal people afresh whilst goldfield historians predominately fail to lift their gaze from a singularly stale and erroneous outlook on Aboriginal people's role on the goldfields.

VICTORIAN GOLDFIELDS

A survey of historical literature within generalist studies of Victorian history on the subject of the gold era has revealed a substantial corpus of work. There have been vigorous discussions about the revolutionary energy the gold rushes brought to individual states in nineteenth century Australia but it was argued that progress occasioned by gold occurred at the 'price of the virtual destruction of the aborigine'.[78] Similarly, the only explanatory reference to Indigenous people in Bate's *Victorian Gold Rushes* was that racialism was little advanced in Australia before the arrival of the Chinese miners because 'the Aborigines had been swept aside'.[79] The potent silence drawn down upon Victorian Aboriginal people and their presence on the goldfields, especially in regional histories of the north-eastern and Gippsland regions

[77] Goodman in McCalman, ed., Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia. p.33
[78] Serle, The Golden Age - a History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861. p.3
[79] Bate, Victorian Gold Rushes. p.3

of Victoria, is singularly evident. Many have totally expunged the existence of Aboriginal people or effectively excised them by offering only a rakish sentence or two.[80]

This is not to suggest that other regions have fared manifestly better or (sadly) that professionally trained historians have been more rigorous. Paradoxically, some senior historians have written some of the most perfunctory treatments of Aboriginal people in their analyses of Victorian regional centres and goldfields.[81]

Occasionally it is possible to locate studies of Victoria's gold rush period which consider what role Aboriginal people played on the goldfields and the subsequent cultural and demographic consequences, but often these studies provide an emaciated view of Aboriginal responses to the goldfields and they rarely articulate Aboriginal voices. Historian David Goodman's comparative study of Californian and Victorian gold rushes in *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (1994) is indicative of an emerging response by historians to the subject of Aboriginal dispossession, displacement and historical role *off* the goldfields. Goodman, for example understood that the historical record was clear about the paramount importance of the Indigenous peoples in both California and Victoria as a workforce off the goldfields. Yet,

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[80] H Buchanan, "Early Walhalla Reminiscences," Victorian Historical Journal 22.4 (1950), D Shepherd, El Dorado of the Ovens Goldfields (Blackburn: Research Publications, 1982), R Douglas, East Gippsalnd Gold (Bairnsdale: Mitchell River Press, 1984), L Cranfield, The Golden History of Warrandyte (Warrandyte: Cranfield, 1982), G Heazlewood, "Walhalla," Victorian Historical Magazine (1950), R Christie, Tracks to the Woods Point and Jordan Goldfields (Woods Point: Christie, 1989), A Wylie, Gold in the Shire of Mansfield (Mansfield: Mansfield Historical Society, 1987), D Morgan and M Morgan, Happy -Go-Lucky (Blackburn: Acacia Press, 1987), A Bailey and R Bailey, "Matlock; an Alpine Gold Mining Town in the 1860s," Victorian Historical Journal 48 (1977).

[81] Griffiths makes only three generalised references to Aboriginal people which are not cited and does not refer to Aboriginal people and mining. See T Griffiths, Beechworth: An Australian Country Town and Its Past (Melbourne: Greenhouse Publications, 1987), T Griffiths, "The Stranded Town: Beechworth and Its Past," Research Thesis, Melbourne University, 1980. Barry Bridges' examination of the Native Police includes only scant reference to their role on the goldfields. B Bridges, "The Native Police Corps, Port Phillip District and Victoria, 1837-1853," Royal Australian Historical Society Journal 57.3 (1971). Also see: Bate, Lucky City.

significantly, Goodman and other historians[82] have singularly failed to converse about Aboriginal role *on* the goldfields itself.

Mysteriously, a suite of historians have neglected the role of Victorian Aboriginal people on the goldfields proper, yet have attested to their pivotal role in the pastoral industry during the gold rush. It is as if the historical record was mute about their role on the Victorian goldfields, or, Aboriginal people were never present on the actual goldfields. Bafflingly, Goodman notes that 'Californian Indians did participate in the gold rush as miners'[83] but failed to note either the presence of Aboriginal miners on the Californian diggings[84] or the more overt presence of Aboriginal people on Victorian diggings. More recently, Broome has somewhat redressed this issue in his study of Aboriginal Victorians, but surprisingly he has not dwelt on the subject of their contribution to the gold mining industry, electing instead to focus on Aboriginal people's experiences at Reserves and Mission Stations.[85]

This omission cannot readily be explained away by citing Stanner's cult of forgetfulness, as Goodman, Broome and other historians and curators have positioned

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[82] D Cahir, "Golden City, Black History: Koorie History in the Context of Eureka," The Legacy of Eureka: Past, Present and Future, eds. Anne Begg-Sunter and Kevin Livingston (Ballarat: Australian Studies Centre, University of Ballarat, 1998), Attwood, The Making of the Aborigines, Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers.", R Broome, "Victoria," Contested Ground, ed. Ann McGrath (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1995), M Christie, Aboriginals in Colonial Victoria (Melbourne: MUP, 1979), Curthoys and Moore, "Working for the White People.", D Goodman, "Reading Gold-Rush Travellers' Narratives," Australian Cultural History 1.10 (1991), Goodman, Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s, J Lennon, "Interpreting Victoria's Gold Rushes," Historic Environment (Carlton: Council for the Historic Environment, 1989), Reynolds, Black Pioneers, AEaT Sullivan, ed., A Toast to the Days of Gold (Melbourne: Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, 2002), D Goodman, "Making an Edgier History of Gold," Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia, ed. Iain McCalman (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).

[83] Goodman, Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s. p.20

[84] There are numerous references in the historical record which detail the experiences of Aboriginal people mining in California. See: I Clark, ed., The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate: 10 June 1849 - 30 September 1852, vol. 6 (Clarendon: Heritage Matters, 2000), J Monaghan, Australians and the Gold Rush (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), B Niall, Georgiana: A Biography of Georgiana Mccrae (Melbourne: MUP, 1994).

[85] R Broome, Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800 (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2005).

Aboriginal experiences deliberately under their gaze. No, it has to be explained by other answers. Increasingly, my discussions with historians and curators[86] who are actively researching and interpreting inter-racial and/or goldfield histories have led to a number of notions which may explain their failure to disinter and discuss documentary evidence about Aboriginal presence *on* Victorian goldfields. The failure may be attributed to the following (non-exhaustive) array of explanations:

1. There is a dearth of micro-studies on colonial Victorian Aboriginal history, especially post 1850. Arguably, historians and others have, in the absence of any detailed studies associated with Aboriginal people's *involvement on* the goldfields, languidly cut and pasted 'given' aspects of Aboriginal people in the gold rush period (such as their demographic decline and social dislocation) into their wider and more generalised discussion about Victoria's gold rush in a similar way to their portrayal of the role of other ethnic groups on the goldfields such as Finns or Portuguese.

2. Because historians have traditionally only discussed the topic of colonial Aboriginal history in terms of inter-racial conflict and violence, a connection with Aboriginal labour history on the goldfields of Victoria has not emerged.

3. Aboriginal people's numerically small (and dwindling) population compared with dramatic increases in non-Indigenous population in the gold rush period resulted in a less visible presence than in the pastoral period.

4. The greater prominence of recently published studies which acknowledge Aboriginal people's role and contribution to the pastoral industry in southern Australia and the relative absence of such studies of the mineral industry.

[86] I have held discussions with numerous historians including: David Goodman, Geoff Hocking, Rodger Trudgeon (curator of Ballarat's Gold Museum), Ann Curthoys, Tim Sullivan (Deputy CEO of Sovereign Hill) and several other historians and writers who have experience in this field of study.

A METHODOLOGY FOR RECONSTRUCTING THE HISTORY OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND GOLD MINING IN VICTORIA FROM 1850-1870

As an economic sectoral history, this study aims to contribute to a reconstruction of the place, role and contribution of Aboriginal people in a historically specific region – that region being the state of Victoria formerly known as the Port Phillip District of the colony of New South Wales. This chapter is a consideration of the methodology of this research objective and a detailed examination of the information sources that are available. I have previously established the pedigree of this research through a review of economic, historical and anthropological approaches to Indigenous involvement in industry sectors, and gold mining in particular. An examination of history's discourse on Aboriginal contribution to gold mining has shown that it is under-theorised and under-researched. Much of the discourse has been either suggestive of 'what is to be done?' or has been conducted at a very general level. Indeed in the Australian context, relative to themes such as the early discovery and prospecting of gold by Aboriginal people or the economic initiatives of agriculture and trade, Indigenous economic activities remain neglected. In a recent methodological discussion, McCalman considered this point when he argued that historians should focus not only on the teleology of economic and national development but also on the creation of a historical narrative which evokes multiple voices, different angles of vision and diverse disciplinary frameworks.[87]

In terms of the reconstruction of Indigenous narratives within labour and economic sectoral histories; the practice of historians has been naïve; and its discourse has been largely unexamined.[88] Since the 1980s, methodological debate within the history discipline has attempted to address these shortcomings and suggest prescriptions that

[87] McCalman, ed., Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia. p.8
[88] See Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers."

will overcome them. McCalman, when surveying Australia's pioneering gold historians, discerned that they had shown a preoccupation with conversing with the narratives of the 1890s. He proposed instead that it would be 'instructive to study the dynamics which shaped gold-rush society and the cultural lens through which they have been understood'.[89] McCalman celebrates the return of micro-histories and narrative history in the practice of academic history writing using evidence from a myriad of sources including the oral, visual, aural, tactile and material in order to extract hidden meanings from seemingly mute images or objects. In this study, emphasis is firstly placed on reconstruction of Aboriginal roles on the goldfields at the time of the goldrushes, or soon after. It is obvious that much information is missing from this reconstruction, but an attempt has been made to construct an Aboriginal colonial history whilst acknowledging Reynold's[90] and Blaskett's summation that evidence of contact will always be inadequate largely because of the sources' 'ignorance of traditional Aboriginal culture...and only infrequently do they illustrate the feelings of blacks [Aboriginal people] towards Europeans.'[91]

HISTORICAL SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

The major sources of textual evidence are the contemporary accounts of miners, government officials (including mining surveyor, police, Aboriginal Protection Boards) and travel writers which are usually in the format of letters, diaries, memoirs, reminiscences and reports. Other information comes from newspapers, promotional material, photographic collections, family histories, artworks (both Aboriginal and

[89] McCalman, ed., Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia.
[90] H Reynolds, "Aboriginal-European Contact History: Problems and Issues," Journal of Australian Studies 3 (1978).
[91] Blaskett, "The Aboriginal Response to White Settlement in the Port Phillip District, 1835-1850." p.9

non-Indigenous), squatter records and government records. Because very little oral history of the goldfields from an Aboriginal perspective has been recorded this study has relied on non-Indigenous perceptions to extrapolate other reasons to explain the draw of the goldfields for Aboriginal people.

Warnings have come from a number of scholars including Reynolds, McBryde, Critchett and Clark[92] who maintain 'that it must be recognised each of these sources of evidence poses problems for any attempt to utilise historical evidence in an effort at reconstructing an Aboriginal colonial history', there are potent reasons for strong source criticism to ensure an avoidance of uncritical or naïve reading of textual evidence.

Linguist and historian, Jane Simpson, warns about the gulf of misunderstanding that can be construed, especially in terms of a non-Aboriginal context, when reconstructing from European records.[93] Whilst the use of family histories and biographies is problematic, it does not preclude the historian from utilising them provided there is appropriate sensitivity to a number of factors. Simpson notes the importance of emphasizing that studies such as *Black Gold* are 'preliminary' as material from the oral traditions of Kooris has not been used, and thus this study sets out to make 'accessible the information about the people contained in the invaders' records'.[94] Other source materials that have not been substantially 'mined' include the large volumes of predominately un-indexed correspondence in the Public Records Office relating to Aboriginal people and the vast array of again un-indexed regional

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[92] I McBryde, "Ethnohistory in an Australian Context: Independent Discipline or Convenient Quarry," Aboriginal History 3 (1979), H Reynolds, The Other Side of the Frontier (Melbourne: Penguin, 1982), Critchett, "'Come on in the Water's Fine' the Ethics of Writing Nineteenth Century Aboriginal Biographies." and Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.37

[93] J Simpson, "Introduction," History in Portraits: Biographies of Nineteenth Century South Australian Aboriginal People, eds. Jane Simpson and Luise Hercus, vol. Monograph 6 (Canberra: Aboriginal History, 1998). p.12

[94] Simpson, "Introduction." p.2

newspapers. It is anticipated that future researchers will be able to further add substantially to our understanding of Aboriginal people's role on the Victorian goldfields.

Simpson and Hercus have suggested three paths, instrumental in the writing of this study, in a bid to 'understand the Aboriginal world view as well as report their memories'[95]

> 1. Looking at what the Aboriginal people did, and what happened to them, in the light of what was happening in South Australia [Victoria] at the time
> 2. Understanding the intentions (both conscious and unconscious) of the Europeans who wrote about Aboriginal people. Why did they write what they wrote? How did they depict Aboriginal people? What the invaders chose to record and what they omit says almost as much about them as it does about the *meyu* and *korne* [Kooris]. The invaders fit people into their expectations.
> 3. Recreating the context in enough detail for us to believe that we have some understanding of who the people were and why they did what they did. Even through the bald words of the written English records...[96]

Other Aboriginal history historians such as Jan Critchett and Henrietta Fourmile have articulated similar helpful parameters in 'Aborigines as Captives of the Archives'[97] and 'Ethics of Writing Nineteenth Century Aboriginal Biographies'.[98]

Gold seeking Aboriginal people in the historical manuscripts and the profile they received in newspaper reports of their gold finding exploits was very significant. This extraordinary gap in published histories of gold in Victoria which have almost unanimously neglected the 'black gold' account is difficult to explain. Part of the answer may lie in the fact that there appears to be very little oral memory of the goldfield era passed on in Victorian Aboriginal oral histories whilst in the northern

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[95] Critchett, "'Come on in the Water's Fine' the Ethics of Writing Nineteenth Century Aboriginal Biographies." p.24
[96] Simpson, "Introduction." pp.12-13
[97] Critchett, "'Come on in the Water's Fine' the Ethics of Writing Nineteenth Century Aboriginal Biographies."
[98] H Fourmile, "'Who Owns the Past? Aborigines as Captives of the Archives'," Aboriginal History 13.1 (1989).

regions of Australia there is a vivid (and on-going) associative memory with the cattle – pastoral industry which scholars may draw upon with ease.

Non-Indigenous voices were not a homogenous entity - culturally, socially or at a class status. The goldfields are known to have attracted a truly cosmopolitan and eclectic mass of people to Victoria who viewed Aboriginal people through a myriad of spectrums. Subsequently, any historical reconstruction of Aboriginal peoples' goldfields experience requires a contextual overlaying to ensure non-Indigenous voices are not confined to middle-class and predominately English accounts.[99]

Moreover, ethnohistorical evidence is by its very nature partly fragmented and non-comprehensive. This is particularly so when consulting sources that did not claim to examine Aboriginal ethnography but merely touched on the subject. McBryde and Clark[100] rightfully point out that reliance on a careful sorting of all available historical evidence to compensate for missing regional ethnographies may prove illusory. It is envisaged that 'all available information' will be scanty and thus the best outcome that can be hoped for is a composite picture by pooling the fragments of various writers.[101]

Clark discusses the issues surrounding the quality and character of sources in some detail and maintains that a high order of critical source assessment must be maintained, in tandem with strict controls on chronology and location, so that the dangers of generality and vague comparison are minimised.[102]

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[99] To this end, I have attempted to draw from a wide range of cultural sources such as: Swedish, Italian, Russian, Jewish, German, French, Finnish and American.

[100] Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.47

[101] McBryde, "Ethnohistory in an Australian Context: Independent Discipline or Convenient Quarry." p.141

[102] Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.38

Clark and other historians have expressed their surprise and disappointment that the long associations with Aboriginal people which pastoralists, missionaries and others had (and therefore more chances than explorers of observing and recording Aboriginal society) did not prove to be more valuable to their studies, adding: 'Many of these sources contain little more than accounts of conflict between Europeans and Aborigines or anecdotal stories about particularly colourful characters'.[103] Sadly, the majority of miners' diaries and other correspondence reflect the deficiencies of earlier pastoral records. This is not surprising given the struggle for supremacy over the land which the pastoralists and Aboriginal people fought over concerned the permanent occupation of entire tribal estates whereas the miners were short term sojourners concerned only with small (land) claims. A problem, Clark has articulated about reminiscences and memoirs is the fact that 'they are written some years after the events they discuss and occurrences that are described, and it is difficult to counter the possible distortion and selectivity of the writer's memory.'[104]

It is also necessary, as Goodman has pointed out that 'arm chair' writers, prevalent in the gold mining period, need to be carefully screened for generalities about Aboriginal people that were widely promulgated in this period. One of the more infamous examples of this genre was a book by John Sherer, which was up till recently promoted as one of the finest examples of a first hand account of the mining districts in Australia, until it was discovered that Sherer had never been to

[103] Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.50. Blaskett and Critchett also underscore this issue. See: Blaskett, "The Aboriginal Response to White Settlement in the Port Phillip District, 1835-1850.", Critchett, A Distant Field of Murder; Western District Frontiers 1834-1888.:

[104] Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.50

Australia.[105] However, despite all these shortcomings, a meticulous sifting and filtering of this source material demonstrates not only the presence of Aboriginal people on the goldfields of Victoria, but also enables discussion of the nature and extent of Aboriginal agency on the goldfields. Furthermore, they reveal that the responses of non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal people varied to such an extent that homogeneity of response by either Aboriginal people or non-Indigenous people cannot be assumed.

The sources enable a reconstruction of the events and factors which influenced the developing roles, of Aboriginal people on the goldfields and the relations between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people, by contributing to a knowledge of the following variables: the degree of knowledge Aboriginal people had about gold; cultural associations with gold; Aboriginal reactions and attitudes towards non-Indigenous gold seekers; Aboriginal attempts to 'Aboriginalize' non-Indigenous people; the success of Aboriginal people to adopt and adapt gold mining and service industries to suit their traditional economies; the degree of social and environmental impact gold mining had on Aboriginal people; the degree of control Government and missionary agents exerted over Aboriginal people; the morality of legal and financial compensation for Aboriginal people; and attempts to 'Europeanize' the Aborigines.

There are particular weaknesses associated with this source of information. Firstly, a major problem arises because the evidence is usually described in a very broken chain of events or negotiations. Miners often recorded Aboriginal people as if capturing them in a digital photograph only as they related to their non-Indigenous mining pursuit, rather than assigning meaning to the acts in which they jointly participated. This problem is partly obviated by lowering our aims, so that instead of seeking an

[105] See: D Goodman, Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

assessment of the 'full impact', we seek an assessment of the impact for a particular individual or clan in a certain period, on a particular goldfield. Secondly, there is the difficulty of applying strict chronological and geographical controls. Because miners rarely recorded Aboriginal names of individuals, clan names or in some instances what goldfield they were writing about, it is difficult to reconstruct the spatial or socio-political context. Often in reminiscences and memoirs miners and others failed to specify what year they are referring to and due to the enormous changes to geographic features such as re-routing of creeks or entire bush-lands being denuded, minimal assumptions can be made in some circumstances without cross-referencing with the data from other sources. However some strict geographical controls can be applied to the mining districts (post 1860) where Honorary Correspondents to the Board for the Protection of Aborigines had close association with clans in their local area for decades.

The Correspondents' writings are of critical value in that they often provide detailed information on the location, numerical composition, and level of economic activity with non-Indigenous people, Aboriginal initiatives towards self-determination, and traditional movements across clan estates and attitudes towards interference from colonial agents of control, attraction towards the goldfields, social dislocation and forced modification of their culture. The problem with these reports is two fold. Firstly, the Correspondents did not commence until 1860 and so a decade of data is non-existent from this source. Secondly, as the Correspondents were agents of control, and had in many cases a genial outlook about 'their' Aboriginals, their writings are infused with a parent-like outlook towards them, and thus there is an increasing emphasis in their reports on curbing their traditional culture.

Artwork, Photography and Promotional material

Careful consideration has been given to appraising the rigour of artwork and photography from the gold mining period which depicts Aboriginal people. Bain Attwood and others have examined how photographs and (both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous) artwork depicting Aboriginal people have been used to place Aboriginal people into a mould to suit prevailing philosophies of the period.[106] Have they been merely planted into the picture as exotic figures? In some instances such as Eugene Von Guerard, a painter on the 1850s goldfields of Victoria, we may consult his journal and with a reasonable degree of assuredness, alongside other corroborating primary documents, ascertain whether the events Von Guerard has painted are likely to be realistic depictions or are romantic archetypes that salved the European conscience.[107] In other instances the insertion of Aboriginal figures in both fictional literature[108] and artwork is a tool by which the artist is adding action, adventure and movement in the artwork, and bears little or no likeness to other historical sources.[109]. Consideration must also be given to promotional material that was published in

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[106] J Lydon, Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians, (Perth: Duke University Press, 2005), Attwood, The Making of the Aborigines, J Urry and C Cooper, "Art, Aborigines and Chinese: A Nineteenth Century Drawing by the Kwat Kwat Artist Tommy Mcrae," Aboriginal History 5.1-2 (1981), Christie, Aboriginals in Colonial Victoria, Goodman, "Reading Gold-Rush Travellers' Narratives.", M Harris and A Forbes, The Land That Waited (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1967), W Owen, ed., Remembering Barak (Melbourne: NGV, 2003), D Reilly, "Antoine Fauchery: A French Artist's View of the Goldfields," Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia, ed. Iain McCalman (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), M Rich, ed., Eugene Von Guerard in Ballarat: Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by Eugene Von Guerard (Ballarat: Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, 1990), State Library of Victoria, "Koori History: Sources for Aboriginal Studies in the State Library of Victoria," La Trobe Library Journal 11.43 (1989), Simpson, "Introduction.", J Lydon, "The Experimental 1860s: Charles Walter's Images of Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, Victoria," Aboriginal History 26 (2002).

[107] Rich, ed., Eugene Von Guerard in Ballarat: Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by Eugene Von Guerard.

[108] See: D Clacy, Lights and Shadows of Australian Life (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1854), A Campbell, Rough and Smooth or Ho! For an Australian Goldfield (Quebec: Hunter and Rose, 1865).

[109] LC de Beauvoir, Gold Mining at Ballarat, Canberra. In stark contrast to Comte's depiction of Aboriginal people at Ballarat as barbarous savages a number of Von Guerard's works such as 'Natives Met on the Road to the Diggings' depict a romanticized vision of Aboriginal people unsullied by British imperialism and without any accoutrements of non-Indigenous material culture. Neither of these works' depictions of Aboriginal people is borne out by other documentary material.

England about Australian goldfields with its primary purpose to attract emigrants by providing a 'true' picture of the goldfields. These guides invariably relate anecdotal tales of 'untutored savages' where 'Civilisation has been no improving genius on them'[110] or similar fare.

Newspapers

Markus[111] and Clark[112] have discussed the value of newspapers and considered that this information source suffered from the limitations applicable to other sources and also from limitations peculiar to newspapers. Newspapers are public documents that present information in a genre which is easily 'digestible' for a non-Indigenous audience, and often in many nineteenth century newspapers the lack of contextual background in their reports combined with a tendency to lampoon Aboriginal people demonstrates that Aboriginal people had been reduced to the status of exotica. Clark similarly observed that the language of nineteenth century articles 'demonstrates that the Aborigines had been reduced to the status of 'things', objects of amusement, objects of censure for alcohol abuse, objects of paternalistic pity; in short they had become 'necrophilic'.'[113] The value of newspapers for this study lies in the factual style which is often easily cross checked with other sources such as inquests to corroborate the reliability of the source. Syndicated news reports from the goldfields regularly reported on 'notable Aboriginal personages' and thus provide us with valuable biographical material often lacking in miners' letters and diaries.

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[110] DJ Golding, ed., The Emigrant's Guide to Australia in the Eighteen Fifties (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1973). p.115C Brout, Guide for Emigrants to the Australian Gold Mines, trans. Didier Leclere (Paris: Unknown, 1861), A Journalist, The Emigrant in Australia (London: Addey, 1852).
[111] A Markus, "Newspapers," Aboriginal History 1 (1979).
[112] Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria.
[113] Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.54

Some of the limitations and weaknesses of almost all sources including newspapers, diaries, and correspondence and government records are:

- the difficulty of applying strict geographical controls. Miners, newspapers and in fact nobody (barring the Aboriginal Guardian or ethnographers) rarely took any care in recording clan names or even specific geographic locations, sometimes referring to a 'group of natives from the Murray' for example
- reminiscences and memoirs, whilst a source of important information, must be viewed by the historian with initial skepticism, as often they were written years after the events described, and it is difficult to counter the possible ideological changes, selectivity and distortion that time often produces. There is also reason for caution when appraising sojourners to the goldfields who had only brief and fleeting first hand observations of Aboriginal people (or relied on other people's accounts)[114] as opposed to Australian-born or miners who had a good deal of experience and encounters with Aboriginal people.[115] Fortunately, there is an abundance of historical sources from the goldfields period, and thus the sources can be cross checked for a degree of veracity
- public documents such as newspapers generally only recorded Aboriginal people when they directly affected non-Indigenous society and thus are likely only to record very specific roles such as guiding, alcohol abuse and amusement. This can give a very distorted picture of Aboriginal peoples' presence on the goldfields; but this bias towards certain 'activities' can be offset by cross checking with other sources such as diaries and letters to redress the imbalance.

[114] See: T McCombie, Australian Sketches (London: W.Johnson, 1861), F Journet, L'australie: Description Du Pays, trans. Etienne Lambert (Paris: Rothschild, 1885).
[115] See: L Blake, ed., A Gold Digger's Diaries by Ned Peters (Newtown: Neptune Press, 1981), P Cuffley, ed., Send the Boy to Sea: The Memoirs of a Sailor on the Goldfields by James Montagu Smith (Noble Park: Five Mile Press, 2001), C Eberlie, Diary, RHSV MS, Melbourne.

The primary period researched in this study is 1850-1870, and the geographical area now known as Victoria. The rationale for the starting point in this timeframe depends upon the cessation of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate in 1850 and the official discovery of gold in Victoria a year later. Originally it was intended that the study would encompass the period 1850-1900 but as the research progressed it became apparent that by 1870 three factors, namely the significant de-population, the effective conclusion of alluvial mining and draconian legislative powers controlling Victorian Aboriginal lives resulted in Aboriginal people being to a large extent marginalized in their role on the goldfields, the major focus of the study.

The thesis is divided into thematic chapters that at times cross over chronologically and thematically as it will be demonstrated there is a strong inter-relation between some of the themes covered such as presence on the goldfields and participation in gold mining. In addition, the scope of this study extends, at times, past the chronological period and political boundaries. The thesis is organized in the following fashion:

Chapter One. *Aboriginal peoples' presence and attitudes towards gold mining*

The central aim of the first chapter is to establish that gold mining occurred on Aboriginal land and to examine the evidence that Aboriginal people in Victoria came to possess a cultural and economic affinity with gold, ranging from incorporation of gold as a precious metal into creation stories, seeking gold as independent prospectors, and actively avoiding the social dislocation and environmental degradation that the gold rushes heralded in. Aboriginal peoples' perspectives about

work and specifically the work of finding gold are examined, as are Aboriginal attitudes towards the metal gold itself and its extraction.

Chapter Two. *The Attraction of Aboriginal People to Gold Mining*

The second chapter deals with why Aboriginal people were attracted to the goldfields and thus sets out to explore the intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors such as new wealth, new sights, new sounds, and new alliances which prompted Aboriginal people in Victoria to participate in 'gold society'. And, conversely, it also studies how non-Indigenous people in Victorian gold mining society perceived Aboriginal input into the race for gold, for they too were equally captivated by the otherness, or the exotica of experiencing Victorian Aboriginal culture firsthand.

Chapter Three. *Discoverers and General Fossicking*

The sometimes pivotal role Aboriginal people played in the discovery of new goldfields and their considerable participation as independent gold seekers is examined. This section seeks to contribute to the discussion of the level and nature of relationships which were brokered with non-Indigenous miners, both from a sexual and labour perspective. It shall also briefly survey the extent of their involvement as miners in northern America, other immigrant Indigenous miners in Victoria and Sino-Aboriginal relations.

Chapter Four. *Guiding to and on the Goldfields*

This chapter deals with how Aboriginal people initiated and keenly brokered a niche work relationship in the vital role of guide, or what would be termed in today's parlance, 'expert Indigenous consultant' on and off the goldfields. It also discusses the

rationale for Aboriginal people involving themselves in the guiding profession and outlines why non-Indigenous people sought out Aboriginal guides both on and off the goldfields.

Chapter Five. *Trackers and Native Police*

This chapter aims to contribute to the discussion of the level and character of Aboriginal people as a police force and later as official trackers, by both colonial governments and non-Indigenous miners. It examines the significance of their role in tracking, a highly skilled occupation which unlike any other was perceived as the preserve of Aboriginal people, rarely, if ever, emulated by non-Indigenous people.

Chapter Six. *Trade, Commerce and the Service Sector*

Chapter six is concerned with bringing to light some aspects of Aboriginal entrepreneurship practiced during the gold rush period and other less 'visible' yet instrumental occupations performed by Aboriginal people on and around the goldfields. It sets out to provide a powerful riposte to the generalist historiography which has relegated Aboriginal work, trade and commerce during the gold rush period to a desultory footnote.

Chapter Seven. *Indigenisation*

This chapter examines how sections of the non-Indigenous mining community embraced elements of both the material and non-material Aboriginal culture. The ideological shift adopted by non-Indigenous people towards being indigenised particularly in the subject of Indigenous foods and the mutual benefits of inter-racial amity which ensued are appraised.

Chapter Eight. *Co-habitation*

This chapter considers the mutually binding relationships that developed between some non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal people especially on the goldfields. Conversely, it shall also be demonstrated that the process of living between two cultures was not a homogenous one across Aboriginal Victoria.

Chapter Nine. *Aboriginal people off the goldfields*

Chapter nine is concerned with addressing the paradox of, on the one hand, Aboriginal workers off the goldfields being universally highly valued and considered of great benefit by non-Indigenous pastoralists and farmers in the study period, and, on the other hand, the evidence of great disparagement also being held towards Aboriginal workers.

Chapter Ten. *Social and Environmental Changes*

This chapter seeks to contribute to the discussion of the level and character of the immense social, environmental and subsequently demographic changes which directly affected the Aboriginal people in Victoria during the study period. It also sets out to demonstrate that the goldfields were an inherently violent and dangerous landscape where Aboriginal people suffered greatly from inter-racial and inter-necine violence, and on occasion perpetrated violence towards non-Indigenous mining communities.

Chapter Eleven. *The Agents of Control: Governments and Missions*

Chapter eleven outlines the relative absence of policy relating to Aboriginal affairs in Victoria during the 1850s, and discusses the considerable impact Government and

Missionary organizations during the 1860s exerted upon Aboriginal people's lives, particularly in auriferous regions.

CHAPTER ONE: ABORIGINAL PEOPLE'S PRESENCE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOLD MINING

The history of gold has traditionally excluded a whole quadrant from its landscape. This chapter aims to reconstruct the close association between Aboriginal people and Victoria's gold mining that undoubtedly existed during the nineteenth century. This chapter shall also demonstrate Victorian Aboriginal people were purposeful actors on the goldfields, reacting and responding to another wave of dispossession (the first having been the pastoralists in the period 1835-1850). Numerous adaptive responses made by Aboriginal people to the goldrush phenonema will be enumerated, ranging from incorporation of gold as a precious metal into creation stories, seeking gold as independent prospectors and actively avoiding the social dislocation and environmental degradation that the gold rushes heralded in.

In 1851 gold was discovered in the fledgling Colony of Victoria. Over the next few years, tens of thousands of people came from all over the world to seek their fortune. And in less than ten years, Victoria changed from a small pastoral settlement to a wealthy and proud colony.

Traces of gold were found during the 1840s - enough to fuel the rumours of gold waiting to be found. In August 1851, gold was found at Warrandyte, Clunes and Buninyong, but the rush really started near Ballarat, at Golden Point. By October, some 6,000 were camped there digging for gold.[116] By mid-1852, 29,000 diggers were camped along the Bendigo Creek.[117] Within a few decades, gold fields stretched from

[116] 'Adult males on goldfields (Gold Commissioners' and Wardens' estimates)' in G Serle The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851-1861 (Melbourne: MUP, 1963). p.388
[117] G Serle, The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851-1861. p.388

Ararat and Stawell in the western districts to Walhalla, Beechworth and Omeo in the mountains.

By the 1860s, individual diggers could no longer make a living from shallow alluvial gold and most were working for wages with mining companies.

News of the Victorian gold discoveries spread rapidly, and soon people were arriving from all over the world to search for gold. By the end of 1852, some 70,000 people had made the journey to Victoria, with over 500,000 people arriving within a decade.[118]

Historian Weston Bate strongly contends that the goldrushes were not merely a mass influx of people from across the globe to auriferous regions in Victoria, they also heralded in new, and at times revolutionary, material and cultural knowledges which were shunned and embraced, to various degrees, by non-Indigenous and Aboriginal people.[119] By the time that gold was 'officially discovered' in 1851[120] the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate had been disbanded (1838-1850), Victorian Aboriginal people had been dispossessed of their land by squatters and frontier conflict had become rare. Many Aboriginal people now sought (or were forced) to adapt to the Colonial hegemony by adopting conciliatory attitudes towards the predominately Anglo colonists in a bid to remain on their ancestral estates. The gold rushes ushered in a prolonged and intense 'fluid class and status situation' not just for the immigrant colonists but for Aboriginal people as well. It soon became clear that gold was literally strewn across the central highlands of Victoria and the rush to the diggings by

[118] Mining Surveyors' returns taken from 'Board of Report', V & P., 1859-60, IV' cited in G Serle, The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851-1861. p.389

[119] Bate, Victorian Gold Rushes.

[120] Prior to the official discovery of gold in Victoria in September 1851 (the newly independent Colony of Victoria was declared in November 1850) there had been numerous previous reports of gold finds at Daisy Hill in the Pyrenees, Warrandyte and Clunes.

the population of Victoria began in earnest. The goldrushes were not uniform or ordered events that can be categorized easily. Non-Indigenous commentators at the time of the rushes testify to the higgledy-piggledy nature of people's movements. Streams of people from socially and racially diverse backgrounds sojourned from one goldfield or gully to another, with the search for the precious metal being the only tangible glue in their communal make-up. The only predisposition to shifting to one location or another (and this was a frequent occurrence) was a more favourable report of gold being found. In this extraordinary epoch which witnessed 300,000 wandering nomads converge upon the auriferous regions of Victoria, non-Indigenous commentary about Aboriginal people became, for a time, almost solely focused on perceptions of Aboriginal peoples' responses to the work of finding gold.

Just as Aboriginal attitudes (or more specifically, non-Indigenous perceptions of Aboriginal attitudes) towards work in the pastoral industry had been instrumental in the making of Aboriginal policy prior to the goldrushes, Aboriginal responses to the gold industry also became pivotal in the formulation of public opinion and Government policy, both during and after the alluvial gold rush period. Hence this chapter shall set out to analyse from both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous perspectives the formation of attitudes about work, and specifically the work of finding gold. In addition, both Aboriginal attitudes towards the metal gold itself and extraction are discussed.

It is a truism to say that the gold rushes took place on Aboriginal land, yet it is a truth that is not often articulated.[121] There are several testimonies that auriferous areas were an Aboriginal cultural landscape; that indeed an indigenous landscape is the

[121] For further discussion see; D Cahir and I Clark, "'Why Should We Pay Money to the Queen?' the Aboriginal Side of Eureka," Journal of Australian Colonial History in print (2006).

fundament that underlies the numerous cultural landscapes laid down post first European settlement in the late 1830s. The evidence for this indigenous spatial organization is found in nation or tribal groups with distinct languages, associations with key sites,[122] burial sites found in gold mining areas[123] and conferred place names on the landscape.[124]

The physical presence of Aboriginal people upon the arrival of non-Indigenous miners on the goldfields of Victoria was noted by both writers and artists of the period. John Dunlop, one of the earliest miners on the Ballarat diggings (August 1851) replied to the 1853 Select Committee's question: 'When you arrived you are sure there was no one there?' Dunlop replied, 'No; there was no sign of any one, only a few huts belonging to the natives'. Miner George Sutherland affirmed Dunlop's account: when recalling the beginnings of Ballarat as a goldfield he conceded that the miners had infringed on an Aboriginal landscape.

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[122] William Howitt, a visitor to the goldfields recognized there was abundant evidence of Aboriginal people's long association with sites near waterways that were also coveted by gold miners. Howitt wrote that he saw 'heaps of wood ashes, partly overgrown with grass, and resembling the barrows of the ancient Britons. They are called native ovens...They contain many wagon-loads of ashes and are found all about this neighbourhood, especially near the creeks.' W Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold, 2nd ed. (Kilmore: Lowden, 1972). p.90. Also see: R Wallace, Eaglehawk: Sketch Book of a Golden Past (Bendigo: Cambridge Press, 1983). p.42. In the Coxall family history there is evidence that Aboriginal camping sites and water holes at Buninyong had been superceded by the gold mines. See: D Coxall, ed., Coxall Family History (Buninyong: Pearl Winn, 1992). p.108. Miners at Maryborough commonly reported the presence of 'splendid nuggets thickly scattered over the white pipe-clay bottom' which was used widely by Aboriginal people across Victoria. Cited in H Nunn, Maryborough (Maryborough: Hedges and Bell, 1954).p.17. In the 1850s, Woiwurrung and Djadjawurrung people were seen grinding seeds into powder near the Indigenous green stone quarry at Mount William.J Reid, When Memory Turns the Key: A History of the Shire of Romsey (Melbourne: Joval, 1992).p.2

[123] Korzelinski came upon ancient burial sites in the immediate proximity of mine shafts. See: S Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia (St Lucia: UQP, 1979). p.91. Curious burial stones were noted on a body unearthed at Moyston in 1891. See: LL Banfield, Green Pastures and Gold - a History of Ararat (Canterbury: Mullaya Publications, 1974). p.17. Chandler noted near the Brisbane Ranges: 'We saw some native graves here....A peculiar feeling comes over one when he sees those graves all alone in the wild bush'. M Cannon, ed., Forty Years in the Wilderness (Arthurs Seat: Loch Haven, 1990).p.38. P Edwards, Survey of Aboriginal Archaeological Remains at Carapooee Gold Prospect (Melbourne: Unknown, 1990).

[124] For an indepth discussion on this issue see Clark, Place Names and Tenure ~ Windows into Aboriginal Landscapes: Essays in Victorian Aboriginal History.

> This was Poverty Flat, about three quarters of a mile from the spot now occupied by Ballarat; and the hut erected by Dunlop may therefore be considered as the first miner's residence in Ballarat. But, solitary as the place was, they soon found on examination that theirs were not the only habitations erected in this region. Several natives' huts were visible in various places.[125]

Other miners put it more prosaically, such as Emily Skinner who looked at the mountains in this country and thought 'how many centuries they have in their quiet majesty, or perhaps have looked down on the Aboriginal nation, always fills one with a solemn wonder and brings those words 'the everlasting hills' to mind.[126] An *Argus* correspondent on the Omeo diggings (20 January 1857) reported a much less peaceful scene, describing non-indigenous miners reacting to Aboriginal mortuary ceremonies, naturally very foreign and harrowing to them.

> The quiet inhabitants of Flooding Creek have been afflicted with the 'blues' for three whole days the result of the melancholy howlings of a few of the Gippsland blacks and their gins, who are lamenting the loss of a number of their tribe slaughtered by the Omeo tribes, at a place called Tongie. It is painful in the extreme to witness the uncontrollable grief of the poor creatures, more especially the gins, who are seen beating their skulls and tearing their faces with their nails frightfully.[127]

Numerous non-Indigenous prospectors chanced upon Aboriginal people occupying their traditional camping sites near mining areas such as a traveler in the 1850s who

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[125] G Sutherland, Tales of the Goldfields (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1880). p.39

[126] E Duyker, ed., A Woman on the Goldfields: Recollections of Emily Skinner, 1854-1878 (Carlton: M.U.P, 1995). p.51

[127] Gippsland Guardian, "The Gippsland Aborigines," *Argus* 16 March 1857.William Blandowski, a naturalist on the Victorian goldfields was informed by his Goulburn River Aboriginal guides about large mortuary sites and their significance, not far from the diggings. See: W Blandowski, Personal Observations in the Central Parts of Victoria (Melbourne: Goodhugh and Trembath, 1855). p.23

reported riding through the smoke- filled Victoria Valley being 'surprised, and were equally surprised by, a group of Aborigines sleeping at the edge of a lagoon.'[128]

Many goldfield historians such as Weston Bate[129] have deduced wrongly that because Aboriginal people had seemingly not perceived gold as a precious metal and were in awe of the hordes of whites who clamoured for gold, that they were bewildered spectators on the goldfields. In conventional histories, Aboriginal people are therefore confined to the margins of the gold-rush story, or are left out of it altogether.[130] These histories must be rewritten. Many writers, historians and academics have in the past failed to observe significant and continued Aboriginal association with gold mining.[131] This is in no way meant to deride previous written histories. Many of these were general studies of Australian gold mining, which only gave at best brief mention of Aboriginal involvement. These have been instrumental in forming an opinion of limited Aboriginal involvement, where significant numbers (per capita) of Aboriginal

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[128] Cited in: Halls Gap & Grampians Historical Society, Victoria's Wonderland (Halls Gap: Author, 2006).p.132.

[129] Bate, Lucky City. S Dingwall, "The Freestone Rush," Gippsland Heritage Journal 8 (1990), Douglas, East Gippsalnd Gold, A Dunlop, "Recollections of Mining at Percydale in the Avoca District," Victorian Historical Journal 42 (1971). K Fairweather, Time to Remember: The History of Gold Mining on the Tambo and Its Tributaries (Bairnsdale: James Yeates and Sons, 1975). Griffiths, Beechworth: An Australian Country Town and Its Past.

[130] G Serle's solitary reference to Aboriginal people was : 'The onward march of European civilisation and progress was made at the price of the virtual destruction of the aborigine' Serle, The Golden Age - a History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861. Griffiths, "The Stranded Town: Beechworth and Its Past." Lennon, "Interpreting Victoria's Gold Rushes.", DSaS Mackinnon, Life on the Australian Goldfields (Melbourne: Methuen`, 1976). Miles, "The Discovery of Gold in Australia."

[131] C Newling, "The Gold Diggers," Royal Australian Historical Society Journal 11.5 (1952). J Adams, Mountain Gold (Trafalgar: Trafalgar Shire Council, 1980), WE Adcock, The Gold Rushes of the Fifties (Glen Waverley: Poppet Head Press, 1977), Bailey and Bailey, "Matlock; an Alpine Gold Mining Town in the 1860s.", C Barrett, Gold: The Romance of Its Discovery in Australia (Melbourne: United Press, 1944), M Beavis, Avoca - the Early Years (Warrnambool: Margery and Betty Beavis, 1986), J Benjamin and L Caelli, "Rush to Rebellion: Victorian Gold Rushes 1851-1854," (University of Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 2004), vol, C Bridges-Webb, The Goldfields of Gippsland (Traralgon: Traralgon and District Historical Society, 1969), R Carless, Golden Memories (Dunolly: Dunolly Goldfields Historical and Arts Society, 1983), Carrodus, Gold, Gamblers and Sly Grog: Life on the Goldfields, 1851-1900, Christie, Tracks to the Woods Point and Jordan Goldfields, S Colquhuon, Mitta Mitta from the Early Pioneer Days (Colquhoun, 1953), T Convey, The Days of Gold: Mining in the Tallangatta District (Albury: T. Convey, 1980).

miners have been successful but also why many researchers have failed to observe the presence of Aboriginal gold miners.

It is incorrect to maintain that Aboriginal people had no concept of mineral value or that 'for the miners, Aboriginal people were invisible, silent and nameless'.[132] There are certainly records of Aboriginal people describing their amazement at the manner in which the whites stampeded over each other in order to find gold. Goldfield writers such as JS Prout observed Aboriginal people (presumably Djadjawurrung) *in situ* at the Mt Alexander goldfield in 1852 but not their active participation in the search for gold. Nor did Prout, or any other goldfields writer yet located, note Aboriginal people identifying it as a precious metal that they utilized prior to the onset of the gold rush in 1851, but Prout's assumption that they had no prior knowledge of the metal's existence is not corroborated. Prout recorded in his art work a scene of mild bewilderment: 'The little group of aborigines at our right, carelessly looking on the busy scene before them, causes one to reflect on the singularity of the circumstance, that, although fond to an extreme of possessing as an ornament any glittering substance, the aborigines as far as we know, have never in their wanderings discovered the precious and most beautiful metal.'[133]

However correct Prout and others were in their considerations of Aboriginal people not having prior cultural or economic associations with gold it can not be argued that digging shafts[134] or the excavation of precious stone and minerals *per se* was foreign to them, as quarrying for crystal, greenstone, sandstone, obsidian, kaolin, ochres and

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[132] S Lawrence, Dolly's Creek (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2000). p.52

[133] J Prout, An Illustrated Handbook of the Voyage to Australia (London: Peter Duff, 1852). p.26

[134] In September 1854 three Aboriginals assisted William Blandowski, a naturalist, to obtain specimens of a number of fauna including a wombat. Blandowski recorded the traditional method of procurement involved digging shafts to a 'depth of twenty two feet'. Blandowski, Personal Observations in the Central Parts of Victoria. p.19

basalt was widespread across Aboriginal Victoria.[135] Long-time resident of Ballarat, William Little, wrote in his poetry of how northern Wathawurrung clans traded gold to shepherds prior to the gold rushes of 1851: 'When erst the shepherds saw the virgin gold A lying shimmering on fair Nature's breast, And how the ignorant aborigines For trifles gave the precious ore away.'[136] Records also exist of extensive quarrying and commercial styled transactions for quarried stone being carried out by Victorian Aboriginal people prior to and after British colonization. WE Stanbridge wrote of Temamet Javolich, a Djadjawurrung clan head, was 'no less than commercial traveler for the sale of suitable stone for axeheads. His blood relationship with numerous tribes gave him access, and he visited the councils of the tribes arranging barter...his stone quarry was on the Charlotte Plains.'[137] In late 1854, naturalist William Blandowski reported that the Woiwurrung quarries of over one hundred acres in a range of hills three miles east of Lancefield: 'present an appearance somewhat similar to that of a deserted goldfield and convey a faithful idea of the great determination displayed by the aborigines prior to the intrusion of the white races.'[138] One non-

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[135] Raddle quarries have been found by Geological Survey teams such as at Maryborough. See: J Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1974). p.8. Telopar or crystal were quarried in the Mallacoota area. See: Mallacooota and District Historical Society, Mallacoota Memories (Mallacoota Historical Society, 1980). p.11. F.R Godfrey noted in May 1850 that "The blacks brought me a great quantity of the crystals found at Bonong [Bonang?]...and use it for painting their faces at a corroboree" Cited in: Fernihurst District History Committee, Reflections from the Kinypaniel (Fernihurst: Author, 1968). p.12. Banfield noted the presence of kaolin quarries in the Ararat district. See: L Banfield, Like the Ark: The Story of Ararat (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1956). p.18. A Polish miner on the goldfields of central Victoria, Seweryn Korzelinski, wrote that 'Natives pay respect to talismans which consist of small, very clear crystals often found deep in the diggings'. Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. p.15

[136] W Little, William Little of Ballarat: Some Writings, ed. Frederick Shade (Mitcham: Eastside Printing, 2001). p.4

[137] Quoted in: Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings. p.8. Ethno-historian, Isabel McBryde, has written at length on exchange and trade in south eastern Australia and has identified several first hand sources which cite the pre-colonialist Aboriginal exchange rate for green stone axe heads, quarried from Mt William. See: I McBryde, "Exchange in South Eastern Australia: An Ethnohistorical Perspective," Aboriginal History 8.2 (1984).p.142

[138] W. Blandowski, 21 October 1854 cited in M Tucker, Kilmore on the Sydney Road (Kilmore: Civic Centre, 1988). p.21. A Batey, a non-Indigenous pastoral worker in the 1860s also described at Mt Camel an Aboriginal stone quarry and had met an Aboriginal man from the Lachlan River district (500 kilometres away) who identified a portion of an axe which had come from the distant quarry. Batey

Indigenous observer, when referring to the same Woiwurrung mining site erroneously contended that this quarry was the only place in Victoria in which the Aborigines had followed an industrial pursuit.[139]

Other evidence that Aboriginal people practiced mining and at the very least had a knowledge of gold's existence comes from a report in *Dickers Mining Journal* of 1864 which described how non-Indigenous miners in Buninyong had unearthed an Aboriginal mining tool many hundreds of metres below the surface which was believed to be similar in all regards to mining tools used by indigenous people in the Americas.[140] Birch argues that whilst there is no evidence that Aboriginal people attached any great economic or spiritual significance to the heavy yellow metal, it is arguable that Aboriginal people from the central Victoria 'must have stumbled over gold nuggets prior to European settlement.'[141] Historian James Flett concurs with Birch and asserts that Victorian Aboriginal people generally knew about gold and that 'They dug it up amongst the yams on Yam Holes Hill – today a part of Beaufort town.'[142] There are instances of gold nuggets being found associated with old Aboriginal sites, well away from auriferous reefs, the Watchem Nugget from near Maryborough (1904) and the Bunyip nugget from near Bridgewater, east of Bendigo, may both have been carried to their recorded place of discovery by Djadjawurrung people.[143] In the Avoca area it is probable that the Djadjawurrung Aboriginal people

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considered that this was proof that Aboriginal people possessed a 'commercial instinct'. W Batey, Reminiscences, RHSV MS, Melbourne. p.98

[139] Quoted by John Taylor in a letter "The Aborigines of Victoria", *Kilmore Advertiser*, 2 June 1906. Cited in Tucker, Kilmore on the Sydney Road.p.21

[140] "Ancient Mining Tools.: Singular Discovery of a Stone Implement or Weapon at Ballarat," Dickers Mining Record 3.7 (1864).

[141] Birch, "Gold in Australia." Birch's supposition is certainly supported by anecdotal stories such as that provided by Forster who noted the local clan's immediate prior knowledge of where gold was to be found in great abundance. The quote is discussed in greater detail in the 'Guiding' chapter. Also see: H Forster, Waranga (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1965).p.19

[142] J Flett, Maryborough (Blackburn: Dominion Press, 1975). p.1

[143] It is equally probable that they were post contact sites.

generally knew of the existence of gold. Indeed in their language, the district's name of 'Kara Kara' signified gold.[144]

Whilst archaeologist-historian Susan Lawrence is largely correct in asserting Aboriginal names and words on maps were absent after 1861 it is fallacious to assume that 'For the miners, Aboriginal people were invisible, silent and nameless.'[145] In this and following chapters it shall be demonstrated that in newspaper articles, reminiscences, letters and diaries there are many inferences to Aboriginal miners on Australian goldfields. For example the names of some gullies, leads or mines are believed to be named after their Indigenous discoverers or at least attributed to Aboriginal people because of their proximity or some fact connected with them.

For example historian James Flett considered that near the Avon River in the 1860s the Queen Mary Diggings were 'named no doubt after the dusky queen [Djadjawurrung elder] of that area.'[146] According to Fairweather a man named 'Nukong was the headman of the 'Ya-itma-thang' during the gold rush days, and it is likely that both Mount Nugong, and the mining township of Nugong were named after him.'[147] A claim near the Ovens River diggings known as 'Black Georges' may refer to an Aboriginal person or alternatively may have been some soubriquet to a non-Indigenous person or a miner of black complexion.[148] On the Bonang fields too there was a 'Blackfellows Gully'[149] and at the Bendigo fields there was a claim known as "The Blackboys Claim", a reference to the Native Police Corps who prospected

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[144] RB Smyth, The Aborigines of Victoria, (Melbourne: VGPO, 1878) Volume 2. Cited in:Beavis, Avoca - the Early Years. p.11
[145] Lawrence, Dolly's Creek. p.52
[146] Flett, Maryborough. p.4. It is equally likely that the diggings were named after Queen Mary of Scots.
[147] K Fairweather, Brajerack: Mining at Omeo and Glen Wills (Ensay: Author, 1983). p.10
[148] P Johnson, Papers, NLA MS, Canberra.
[149] Bendoc Mining Surveyor, Mining Surveyors Report (Melbourne: 1876). n.p

there.[150] 'Native Youth Lead'[151] and 'Blackfellows Lead'[152] in central Victoria are names suggestive of an Aboriginal association with the sites. Some rationale for the bestowing of goldfield toponyms is provided in George Mackay's *Annals of Bendigo* (1912).

> The diggers gave names to the gullies in and around Sandhurst, such as Ironbark, California, Long Spring, and Golden which are appropriate. In the case of Eaglehawk, the first diggers found a large nest of this king of Australian birds in one of the trees in the gully...Sheepshead, Tinpot, and Deadhorse Gullies are ridiculous enough, but they have each reference to some fact connected with them.[153]

Mia Mia is one of the few Indigenous place names given to a lead or a mine.[154] Caution must be taken with attributing Aboriginal connections to placenames bearing epithets of 'black' or 'native' however. A salient illustration of the obfuscation surrounding names that may indicate an Aboriginal association is 'Blackmans Hole' found in Robert Thomas's autobiography of his time on the Campbells Creek and Malmsbury field. Thomas relates how 'about half way up [Sulky Gully] was what was called Blackmans Hole being a claim occupied by New Zealanders whose faces were tattooed...'[155] The locality Black Hill in Ballarat is an example too where the word black is not referring to Aboriginal people's association with the place name but refers to the color of the hill.[156]

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[150] F Cusack, ed., Early Days on Bendigo (Melbourne: Queensberry Hill Press, 1979). p.13
[151] Bate, Lucky City. p.29
[152] Blake, ed., A Gold Digger's Diaries by Ned Peters. p.8
[153] G Mackay, Annals of Bendigo, 1851 to 1867 (Bendigo: Mackay, 1912). p.27
[154] Mia Mia is generally known to mean a traditional bark hut in eastern Kulin languages. There are probably several 'Mia Mia'(s) in Victoria. LJ Tennant contends that the Farquhar's of the Broadford district named their farm 'Mia Mia 'because Aboriginals had a camp nearby [in 1871]. Marks of their graves are still there today'. Cited in B Fletcher, ed., Broadford: A Regional History (Melbourne: Lowden, 1975). p.178
[155] R Thomas, Autobiography, NLA MS, Canberra.
[156] See: Cahir and Clark, "'Why Should We Pay Money to the Queen?' the Aboriginal Side of Eureka."

There is also some cultural evidence that Aboriginal people regarded gold as a precious stone. Aldo Massola recorded a story of how Mounts Buninyong and Elephant were formed (although in doing so he suggested that the legend contains 'post-European elements', believing that gold 'could not have appeared in the original version, since its value only became known to the Aborigines through the white man'). In this account Mount Elephant and Mount Buninyong were once men.

> Mount Elephant had a stone axe. Buninyong offered him some gold for it. Having agreed they met at what is now the Pitfield diggings for the exchange. Some time later Buninyong reconsidered, and desired his gold back. Elephant refused. Buninyong sent him a fighting message, and the challenge was accepted. They met again at Pitfield diggings. Elephant buried his spear in Buninyong's side, and the hole can be seen to this day. Elephant received a deadly blow on the head from Buninyong's stone axe. The gaping hole in Elephant's head can also still be seen. The two men, mortally wounded, retired in opposite directions. Their bodies turned into mountains at the spot where they died.[157]

In other parts of Australia too there is clear evidence of Aboriginal acquaintance with the yellow metal. Henry Jones, a writer on the Australian goldfields relayed that 'it has also been affirmed by some, that the Aborigines occasionally brought gold [before Hargreaves' official discovery] into the settled districts from the Macquarie.'[158] A report appeared in the *Ballarat Star* (22 July 1858) which described some non-Indigenous miner's communications with Aboriginal people on the Upper Balonne River (QLD) which also demonstrated their familiarity with gold.

> After a while a sovereign was shown to them, when one of them, picking up a stone, pointed with his finger to the far west, and intimated that stones of a similar description to the sovereign were to be picked up on the ground, in masses as large as the stone he held. The place was understood to be some

[157] A Massola, Journey to Aboriginal Victoria (Melbourne: Rigby, 1969). p.69
[158] H Jones, Adventures in Australia in 1852 and 1853 (London: Bentley, 1853). p.262

> hundred miles further in the interior, but they signified their intention of bringing some of these stones at their next visit.[159]

Bushmen sharing a yarn with MD Mereweather, an itinerant preacher on the goldfields, informed him of a traveler encountering a 'beautiful valley, surrounded by lofty cliffs, and watered by many streams, where the blacks told him was plenty of the bright yellow metal of which his watch-chain and seals were composed.'[160] An encounter at Comienbar (East Gippsland) in 1888 between Derrimunjie, an Aboriginal stockman, and Sydney Waller, a non-Indigenous Government Prospector demonstrates an extensive knowledge was kept by Aboriginal people in auriferous areas of where gold was to be got, but not necessarily acted upon personally.

> Sid asked the black man to have a cup of tea. As he drank tea and ate damper and jam, the visitor introduced himself as Derramunjie. He said he had been helping Hensleigh [cattle run holder in Combienbar Valley] start off with a mob of cattle and was on his way back to Bendoc. The two men talked and smoked beside the fire for a long time. Derramunjie drew a map in the ashes beside the fire for Sid and told him all the places and names of creeks where he knew gold had been found.[161]

It is also evident judging from oral evidence gained from Indigenous informants that a number of gold discoveries were kept secret from non-Indigenous people from fear of violence and their traditional lands being over-run by non-Indigenous miners.[162] One oral account originating from Fanny Brown, a Wangaaybuwan person, retold by

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[159] "New Race of Aboriginals," *Ballarat Star* July 22 1858.
[160] J Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3 (London: Unknown, 1859).p.199
[161] G Dyce, Combienbar, the Valley of Contentment (Orbost: Dyce, 1982). p.86
[162] Only ten years prior to the gold rush period Aboriginal people in western Victoria had been witness to numerous massacres of their people which left an indelible memory. An unidentified Aboriginal man told William Moodie, a pastoralist near Casterton in the 1850s of how the place-name Fighting Waterholes came into being: 'Blackfellow all runem along scrub in creek, lubra look up scrub, white fellow shoot her down. Two hundred fine fat lubra shot.' Cited in: JA Palmer, ed., William Moodie: A Pioneer of Western Victoria (Maryborough: Hedges & Bell Pty Ltd, c.1975). p.72

Eliza Kennedy related how the finder of a large gold nugget found near Sandy Creek (central-western NSW) was strongly urged to hide it from whites lest they be killed.

> Fanny Brown said that she picked up a piece of gold. All the other people said to her: 'Don't put this rock into your camp! The Whites are looking for rocks just like this!' She said it was big like a quartpot! Just as big as a quartpot used to be (I'll have to say, because you don't see them now). 'Throw it right here into Sandy Creek! Then it will sink into the silt. They are sure not to look here...Fanny Brown said 'I could have taken you to that country where I threw it away into Sandy Creek'. The Whites used to kill Blacks over a piece of rock, that's a fact.[163]

In another version of this story, Fanny Brown was urged by her companions to show her nugget to the Whites because they might give her a lot of money for it. But she had more experience of Whites, having worked for them, and decided to throw it away herself, fearing that they might kill her for the sake of it. This fear of violence from non-Indigenous miners[164] may explain in part the antipathy often commented on in written reports of Indigenous people towards gold mining. Others such as the report in January 1853 from the Commissioner for Crown Lands in the Murray River District, HW Smythe, held that it was nothing but laziness that explained their visible absence from the goldfields:

> There are instances where some of them make themselves useful as Stockmen and Bullock Drivers, but these cases are the exceptions. Even the allurement of gold seeking cannot overcome the natural indolence of their disposition, The Chinaman, the Lascar, the Malay, New Zealander, and African are to be seen working in parties, but in no case is the Aborigine to be met with – he is too indolent to learn or to work, and I fear incurably so.[165]

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[163] Eliza Kennedy quoted in T Donaldson, ed., This Is What Happened; Historical Narratives by Aborigines (Canberra: AIAS, 1986). pp.301-3

[164] William Rayment and others witnessed miners, often in a drunken state, violently assaulting Aboriginal people. Rayment described how 'One of our party had occasion to knock one of these [Aboriginal] fellows down, he sprung from the ground and drawing a knife from his belt he flourished it widely around his head'. See section on violent relationships for further discussion. R Rayment, Diary, SLV Ms, Melbourne. p.45

[165] Smyth in: E Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address (Melbourne: Victorian Legislative Council, 1854). p.24

Interestingly, a similar observation about the lack of participation by Aboriginal people in gold mining but a contrary explanation is implicitly provided by Edward Bell, Commissioner of Crown Lands, (Wimmera District). In his report, also dated January 1853, Bell reported that the pastoral industry was very dependent on Aboriginal labor, that full employment was the norm, that conditions for the Aboriginal workers were high and that a degree of flexibility was built into the pastoral industry to accommodate Aboriginal cultural customs.

> Their usefulness to the white population has been very much increased during the present dearth of labor, produced by the attractions of the Goldfields. There is scarcely a station which the natives are in the habit of frequenting, where they have not been more or less employed...They appear to be gradually acquiring a knowledge of the value of money, and have been temporarily engaged at rates of wages which in ordinary times, would be considered high for emigrant labor. Their migratory propensities are not, however diminished, and even those who have been longest employed on stations, and appear to have acquired a degree of European civilization in dress and habits of living, are not to be debarred the luxury of occasionally throwing off the restraints of civilized life and visiting their accustomed haunts, and joining in the sports and savage (though generally harmless) warfare of their respective tribes. Very few of them have engaged in the search for Gold.[166]

It is also very likely that other Aboriginal people were of the opinion that the further they were away from the diggings the better because of the environmental and social catastrophe encompassing their homelands whilst others found mining settlements magnetic. Bain Attwood in his study on the Djadjawurrung people of central Victoria argues there is evidence that in response to the shocking conditions wrought by the proximity of the diggings to their estates that 'many moved north in the wake of the

[166] Edward Bell, Commissioner of Crown Lands, Wimmera. Correspondence 10 January 1853 in Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address.

gold rushes in order to avoid these conditions and to join their kin on the lower Loddon.'[167]

Mossman and Bannister, commentators on life in Victoria and New South Wales in the early 1850s, considered the issue of Aboriginal attitudes towards work was analogous to the Irish one and had generally (in Victoria) been effectively remedied by amply remunerating Aboriginal people's toil and: 'paying him fair wages for a fair day's work.' The problem as Mossman and Bannister viewed it was not an Aboriginal one but a white one.[168] Miner, John Erskine writing of the Indigenous people on the Mudgee goldfields in NSW, noted on two occasions their invaluable contribution towards building shelters for the whites and also their seeming lack of willingness to labor at mining. Erskine struggled to explain their aversion, more especially in light of the fact that the local Indigenes were clearly adept at participating in the monetary system:[169]

> A few Australian blacks had been attracted to the spot and were very useful in assisting the white men to build their bark gunyahs but the labor of digging and washing was not of a nature to suit their habits
>
> 1 or 2 Australian blacks were lounging about and were said to have been very useful in assisting the diggers to put up their temporary bark huts. None of them seemed tempted to dig for gold on their own account, although they perfectly

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[167] Attwood cites a number of archival sources which demonstrates that fleeing the goldfields was certainly an adaptive response of some Djadjawurrung groups and in all likelihood was probably emulated by other language groups as well. See: Parker's evidence to the 1858 Select Committee, Missionary, Daniel Matthews diary and Board for the Protection of Aborigines archives cited in Attwood, My Country - a History of the Djadja Wurrung;1837-1864. p.53. Blandowski, a naturalist who traveled widely in the 1850s posited that that 'the reason why they regard with indifference their employment by the settlers' in the Goulburn River district was on account of the abundance of easily procurable foods from the riverine eco-system. Blandowski, Personal Observations in the Central Parts of Victoria. p.24

[168] Mossman and Bannister, Australia, Visited and Revisited 295-7.

[169] Non-Indigenous miner's bad treatment of Aboriginal people on the goldfields and the environmental destruction caused by gold mining (discussed in following chapters), also partly explains their lack of gold mining activity. Statements by miners such as P Just and others who emphasized Aboriginal people's lazy and unwilling attitude to work at anything requiring exertion were by their own words contradictory, as writers often acknowledged many had been employed washing sheep, riding horses etc. The nature of work would seem to be the critical issue. For a detailed discussion of this issue see Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers."

> understood its value and one readily sold me a "boomerang" for a couple of shillings.[170]

Miners such as P Just held a similar appraisal: 'they know now that a piece of coined money will procure a quantity of a certain kind of goods, [but] it appears the uncoined gold has no attractions for them'.[171] Somewhat ironically, Erskine's explanation for their unwillingness to clean or wash for gold because it is not in their nature (only advanced societies toil at mining) is exploded a little later in his book:

> At Lawson's Creek 16 miles NNE from Mudgee, a Mr. Bayley had come one day on a party of Australian blacks prospecting on the river on his estate (probably the first who had ever made the attempt) and had encouraged them to proceed.[172]

Erskine's observation of industrious Aboriginal people directly involving themselves in gold mining and motivated by personal profit, either in parties independent of non-Indigenous people or as members of 'mixed prospecting parties', is by no means an isolated example. Mossman and Bannister relate the motives of a party of Indigenous and non-Indigenous miners. The authors deduce that for some the 'road shared' was just as much a motive as personal wealth, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

> They were four in number; one of them had with him his young son, and told us that he was possessed of considerable property, not only as a squatter but as a proprietor of land within the settled boundary. His two neighbours, the others of the party, having resolved to try their fortunes at the diggings, he came with them not so much for gain as because he would not be left behind. The other two were men who possessed property likewise, although of less amount; but their object was specific. They were fully bent on realizing some of the extraordinary sums which were said to be amassed by lucky diggers. One of them was a tall powerful man about six feet two, perhaps more. He was

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[170] J Erskine, A Short Account of the Late Discoveries of Gold in Australia (London: Boone, 1852). p. 41

[171] P Just, Australia: Or, Notes Taken During a Residence in the Colonies from the Gold Discovery in 1851 Till 1857 (Dundee: Durham and Thomson, 1859). p.23

[172] Erskine, A Short Account of the Late Discoveries of Gold in Australia. p.45

> apparently very active for so large a man; he had they said, a little native blood in his veins[173]

Aboriginal peoples' 'great predilection for white money to spend on rum'[174] was often quoted as their sole reason for occasionally being involved on the goldfields in any capacity. Some gold rush period writers such as Robert Caldwell noted, almost reluctantly, that 'a few of them have tried the diggings' and added 'I am not aware that any of them have ever succeeded as diggers.'[175] There is however in published accounts of the goldfields numerous oral anecdotes of conversations with Indigenous people which reinforced the simplistic perceptions held by many non-Indigenous people that Aboriginal societies lacked an industrial spirit, especially in regard to mining. The frequency with which the same refrain is echoed suggests a uniform cultural response to gold mining. Caution should be observed about such comments without provision of the context in which it was provided and also the 'lost in translation' phenomena occurring. Is this remark meant to express that they considered gold was a blight and akin to a fever?[176] Or is it a response to an exclusive activity that is bewildering for them to comprehend? Or is it an invented phrase to express the writer's racist undertones of what he perceives to be a primitive, naïve society? Or possibly, given the frequency and ubiquity of the same refrain from Aboriginal people about working for gold, that it is a standard expression designed to quieten, to satisfy the interviewee with an answer that they are expecting? One tantalizing answer, because it is likely there is no one uniform answer, is Aboriginal people were actively digging for alluvial gold but were being secretive about their

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[173] Mossman and Bannister, Australia, Visited and Revisited. pp.126-7
[174] A Nixon, Inglewood Gold (Greensborough: Sundowner Press, 1982). p.37
[175] R Caldwell, The Gold Era of Victoria (Melbourne: Blundell, 1855). p.105
[176] Goodman has illustrated how many non-Indigenous commentators saw the perils of gold rushes in Goodman, "Making an Edgier History of Gold."

operations in the same manner as some non-Indigenous prospectors who tried to 'put off' others from their claims.

Wilmer, a miner on an unidentified Victorian goldfield, noted that Aboriginal people he met with frequently said: "black fellow no like work" and that "white fellow fool to work hard."[177] In very much the same vein Edward Tame recalled in his reminiscences that in his frequent travels to the goldfields of Victoria he often encountered groups of Aboriginal people (presumably Wathawurrung) near the township of Ballan in central Victoria and maintained that he 'never saw them at work, - they said "white man fool to work for white money" [silver or gold]', yet later related how possum skin rugs form 'good articles of commerce' for them.[178] George Rowe, an English artist and gold miner on the Bendigo and Castlemaine goldfields, directly questioned a number of Djadjawurrung people on their attitudes towards gold mining and manufacturing goods for monetary purposes. Their responses were on first appearances both self-effacing and pragmatic:

> I went to see an encampment of natives we found them in the forest about 60 to 80 lying about some asleep others crouched before a fire wrapped up in a skin or an old blanket many of them speak English the women sitting by a fire had 3 opossums [from] which they were pulling off the fur and then singeing over fire preparing them for eating I asked why they did not kill them and sell the skins "black fellows too idle" to why don't you dig get gold "got no tools white men work black fellows no work we plenty eat without".[179]

However, it should be stressed that in earlier letters Rowe had written several times of Djadjawurrung laboring for both gold and the manufacture of possum skins for money:

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[177] E White, Letters, NLA Ms, Canberra. p.227
[178] R Tame, Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings, Reminiscences, SLV, Melbourne.
[179] G Rowe, Correspondence, Letters, NLA MS 3116, Canberra.

> Their dress is only a blanket or an opossum skin rug thrown over their shoulders and wrapped around them the opossum fur is beautifully soft and makes a warm covering to sleep under and is what most diggers have as it is very light a good one costs 4 pounds...Since I took a sketch of King Billy I have had a visit from all the tribe every day – they bring me small quantities of gold which they pick up from the surface they begin to search for it just behind our tent and go away over the hills they creep along leaning on a stick they are very keen sighted.[180]

Given the numerous accounts of Indigenous participation in gold prospecting itself it is remarkable that they are recorded as expressing a disdain for it. Arguably it was the needless forever toiling that they wish to refrain from, particularly given similar sentiments had been voiced in the earlier pastoral period about shepherding for squatters.[181] Effectively the Djadjawurrung women felt there was no need to consistently participate in an economic activity such as gold mining, and did not possess the necessary tools for a task acknowledged by all races to be a risky venture at the best of times, especially given they had no professed difficulty in procuring all their needs from the bush (an activity looked upon with awe by many non-Indigenous visitors to the Victorian goldfields). One observer noted that without having witnessed the 'consummate art' of the kangaroo hunt by Aboriginal people it would be impossible to conceive of, and that their actions when hunting 'are unequalled by anything we have ever seen in the whole science of calisthenics.'[182] Many miners' accounts equally attest to their supremacy in the bush. One such account, by Edward Tame, ran as follows:

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[180] Rowe, Correspondence.

[181] Charles Griffith, a pastoralist in the Port Phillip District contended in 1845 that Aboriginal people 'do not court a life of labour – that of our shepherds and bullock drivers appears to them one of unmeaning toil – and they would by no means consent to exchange their free, unhoused condition for the monotonous drudgery of such a dreary existence:' New South Wales Legislative Council, Report from the Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines, with Appendix, Minutes of Evidence and Replies to a Circular Letter, Mitchell Library, Sydney. p.17. This sentiment was echoed by other observers such as: G Krefft, "On the Manner and Customs of the Aborigines of the Lower Murray and Darling," Journal and Proceedings of the Philosophical Society of New South Wales (1862-65).

[182] J Sherer, The Gold-Finder of Australia, Fascimilie ed. (Ringwood: Penguin, 1973). p.125

> They are such adepts in the use of primitive arms and implements, and unrivalled in tracking down game, also showing great skill in things concerning everyday life and food...Much cleverness is shown in discovering water and they will live for months when a white man would die of thirst. Every spring and hole containing water is known to them and when no water can be found they will support life on water obtained from the roots of certain trees, or on the dew collected on the grass and shrubs.[183]

In summary, the wide range and significant incidence of situational encounters between Victorian Aboriginal people and prospecting for gold, ranging from passive presence, active discovery to shunning the goldfields, indicates the varied nature of interaction. The degree of Aboriginal participation in the gold rush activities has been shown to be dependent upon many factors such as where gold was to be found, and their ability to continue traditional lifestyles in the face of a very sudden and large population increase in immigrants.

There is no evidence to date that gold held a special significance to Aboriginal people prior to the gold rushes and nor did they covet it as a precious metal. However, there is clear evidence that they knew of gold, evidenced by their name for quartz and gold and also in their showing miners where veins of gold could be located. Although there is no evidence available that they gave gold a value over other minerals it is clear the quarrying and trading of precious stone was an activity carried out for millennia and equally it has been demonstrated that the monetary value of gold was quickly realized and capitalized upon by Aboriginal people. That gold quickly became a valuable commodity in their newly adopted economy and cultural history is attested to by the incorporation of gold into their creation stories and by some Aboriginal families' such as the Briggs' and Connolly's[184] swift and avid entry into gold seeking. A

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[183] Tame, Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings.

[184] See the following chapter for further discussion on these two family's valuing of gold as a precious metal.

considerable corpus of knowledge has been demonstrated to exist, sourced from a multi-disciplinary framework including place names, artwork, poetry, archaeology, archival and oral accounts, which places Aboriginal people not in the wings of the gold epoch, but often firmly ensconced in the social and economic milieu that was the gold rush. The significance and the variety of responses in which Aboriginal people interfaced with gold in the gold rushes of 1850-1870s, especially through their direct involvement in gold prospecting, are discussed further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ATTRACTION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TO GOLD MINING

Whilst the previous chapter focused on establishing evidence that Victorian Aboriginal people came to possess a cultural and economic affinity with gold and were present on Victorian goldfields, this chapter examines why Aboriginal people were attracted to the goldfields. It sets out to explore the intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors such as new wealth, new sights, new sounds, new alliances which prompted Aboriginal people in Victoria to participate in 'gold society'. And, conversely, it also studies how non-Indigenous people in Victorian gold mining society perceived Aboriginal input into the race for gold, for they too were equally captivated by the otherness, or the exotica, of experiencing Victorian Aboriginal culture firsthand.

Clark and Cahir have identified a number of reasons to explain the attraction of the goldfields for Aboriginal people:

> For one thing, the fields were on traditional lands, and they were keen to continue their association with their clan estates. Furthermore the goldfields offered commercial opportunities for trade and exchange. They were also exotic places where unusual people lived with strange possessions and animals...it is also possible to find examples of Aboriginal people themselves, succumbing to gold fever of the Victorian goldfields.[185]

Historian Henry Reynolds suggested that the attraction of gold mining towns, (predominately referring to northern Australian goldfields), was not merely for the exotica, but out of necessity.

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[185] Clark and Cahir, "Aboriginal People, Gold and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria."

> The attraction of the towns was, then, real enough; but it was only half the story. Many family groups were driven in from the countryside by the violence of the frontier, the difficulty of finding enough to eat in their own country, or because they were literally forced off the land by the squatters and police.[186]

To a very large degree Reynolds' summation is most certainly accurate about the pastoral period but rarely in the Victorian historical records, relating to the gold period are there references to Aboriginal people being explicitly forced away from the goldfields due to the violence of the frontier.[187] By 1852-3 all Victorian Crown Land Commissioners and the Guardian of Aborigines, William Thomas, affirmed that inter-cultural frontier violence had all but ceased by 1853. Thomas confidently reported in January 1853: 'We may congratulate ourselves that the weapons of opposition between us and our sable fellows are laid aside...We may safely state that loop holes in huts are no more needed.'[188] Occasionally it was argued by miners that Victorian Aboriginal people were fast disappearing as: 'The diggings have scared away the few that were left in these parts of Victoria [Ballarat]. The writer met a party of half a dozen at Ballarat, but nowhere else did he see them in the Colony.'[189] However, the great majority of historical records from the gold period demonstrate that Nisbet's infrequent observations were not the norm. Indeed, Antoine Fauchery, a miner also at Ballarat, noted Victorian Aboriginal people were 'Divided into nomadic tribes [clans] made up of fifteen or twenty individuals, they are seen now in the bush, now in the towns, and still more frequently on the diggings, which they visit by preference.'[190]

As far as William Craig, a miner at the Mt Cole goldfields, was concerned the reasons for Aboriginal people being attracted to the goldfields were for the same reasons as

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[186] Reynolds, With the White People: The Crucial Role of Aborigines in the Exploration and Development of Australia, Reynolds, Black Pioneers. p.131

[187] The topic of violence on the goldfields towards Aboriginal people is taken up in a following chapter.

[188] Thomas in: Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address.

[189] J Nisbet, Articles, NLA MS, Canberra.

[190] A Fauchery, Letters from a Miner in Australia, trans. A.R Chisholm (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1965).p.96

the non-Indigenous miners, that is to get rich from finding gold and to 'knock it down' at an inn: 'The new area was situated in the hunting grounds of the Mount Cole tribe of aborigines, who with a view of participating in the prosperity, but more especially in the hope of indulging in cheap liquor, shifted camp to our vicinity.'[191] The attraction of new-found wealth was so great, he wrote, that a neighbouring clan who he observed was at enmity with the resident clan shifted into the locality amongst the gold diggings.

> Another [clan] was located some fifteen miles distant, and known as the Mount William clan. By a sort of bush telegraphy the latter soon learned that the Coleites were in clover on the new diggings, and notwithstanding the strange [strained] relations that had existed between the tribes for some years through the abduction of a lubra (woman) from the Williamites, the latter soon put in an appearance.[192]

It is also possible that the attraction for Aboriginal people of the goldfields can be understood better by forming an analogous link with historian Richard Broome's study of Aboriginal boxers. The conundrum Broome set out to discuss was the seeming incompatibility between the attraction an individualistic endeavor such as boxing had for many young Aboriginal men and collective Aboriginal cultural values of Aboriginal boxers in the twentieth century. Broome concluded that community based Aboriginal values can reside with individualistic boxing work ethics, and identified the tent boxing troupe industry offered values and rituals such as: rites of passage initiation, arduous (but shared) lifestyles among predominately other Aboriginal boxers and bush mateship that were not at odds with a kin based and communal Aboriginal reserve lifestyle.

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[191] W Craig, My Adventures on the Australian Goldfields (London: Unknown, 1903). Pp. 276-7
[192] Craig, My Adventures on the Australian Goldfields.pp.276-7

> Despite the arduous life and the indifferent financial returns, most Aboriginal boxers basically enjoyed their several years spent in the tents. The experience provided them with some earnings, much excitement and camaraderie among the boxers: black and white. Alan Moore, son of a [white] tent owner and a tent boxer himself, recalled he and the other boxers would go shooting, catch bush tucker and do mad stunts together...Others stressed the 'educational' value of traveling beyond one's 'beat'. 'Banjo' Clarke recalled 'traveling around a lot of different towns, meeting a lot of good blokes and locals- they would look after you, take you to their homes and things like that'.[193]

Is it possible to identify in the historical sources a similar attraction for Aboriginal people on the goldfields of Victoria? Whilst alluvial gold seeking in particular was essentially an individualistic affair, there were certainly moments of some earnings, much excitement and indications of camaraderie among the miners, black and white. It is difficult at this late stage to extrapolate whether gold mining offered vestiges of rites of passage initiation, but certainly there were many shared arduous moments and bush mateship that was not at variance with core traditional Aboriginal values. It was often noted[194] in both the mining period and the earlier squatting period how much Aboriginal people enjoyed the thrill, adventure and obvious sense of supremacy and importance they attained when guiding or otherwise sharing their corpus of bush knowledge. It is possible that Aboriginal people participating in collaborative mining ventures with whites viewed such opportunities as attractive for the same reasons Broome discerned in twentieth century Aboriginal boxers.

Another factor (one not identified by Clark and Cahir in their bid to identify reasons to explain the attraction of some goldfields), identified by Robertson, a resident in the Piggoreet area, was that the existing gold mining area was overlaid on an extant

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[193] R Broome, "Professional Aboriginal Boxers in Eastern Australia 1930-1979," Aboriginal History 4.1 (1980).

[194] Public officials such as GA Robinson, Chief Protector of Aborigines in Port Phillip (1839-1850) witnessed many occasions where the services of Aboriginal workers and guides was spontaneously and eagerly offered to pastoralists, travelers and officials by Aboriginal people across Victoria, which demonstrated their pleasure in such roles. For examples see: I Clark, ed., The Journals of George a Robinson, Jan.1839-Sept.1840 (Melbourne: Heritage Matters, 1998). I Clark, ed., The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, October 1840-August 1841 (Melbourne: Heritage Matters, 1998).

Indigenous (Wathawurrung) green-stone quarry which was a highly valued area for the very reasons it was esteemed by the non-Indigenous gold miners. Moreover, the usage overlay was multiplied as it was known to be an important recreational and ceremonial area by the clans who also mined in the area. This scenario may have been repeated on many sites across Victoria.[195]

> Though many are still with us that can remember seeing them in groups, very little information has been stored up as to the customs of the Blacks who made this district their hunting ground. For various reasons Piggoreet was a popular camping ground. In the driest of years there was plenty of water and its accompanying animal life. Its prolific vegetation made the marsupials plentiful hence plenty of food for the Blacks. The caves and cliffs gave good shelter from rain and sun. The exposed flints for the making of knives and hatchets must have been a great attraction, as in very few places in Victoria were they so easily exposed as in the exposed cements hereabouts. Most likely Piggoreet, because of its advantages to them, was as popular to the Blacks before the white man's advent as it has been to the said white man, by reason of its romantic scenery and happy days spent in the height of its mining life. Below Christie's Bridge, though now filled with sand, a very large waterhole, formed by a waterfall over a bar of rock just above it, was a popular camping ground for Blacks, as was also the bare hill where Mr. Thos. Jones now resides.[196]

Antoine Fauchery commented on the general attraction of the goldfields for Aboriginal people, an observation which was echoed from many quarters.[197] For example TH Puckle, the Commissioner of Crown Lands based in Hamilton, reported in 1857 that the chief places of resort for the Aboriginal people in his district included the Mt Ararat goldfields. William Huon, of Wodonga, informed the 1858 Select

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[195] Ray Willis and Cliff Latter unearthed an Aboriginal work site in the 1960s whilst widening the Lal Lal Road near Yendon which may have been in same location as gold mining operations. See: R Willis, Aboriginal Archaeology of the Yendon-Lal Lal Area (Buninyong: Buninyong Historical Society, 1989). p.1. Historian James Flett also has noted the presence of Aboriginal 'raddle' quarries in the vicinity of gold mines. Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings.p.8

[196] W Robertson, History of Piggoreet and Golden Lake (Daylesford: Jim Crow Press, 1998). p.12

[197] Unusual people such as an Englishmen afflicted with elephantiasis, causing his feet to be over eighteen inches in length was the cause for some disconcertedness for Aboriginal people near Tallarook, and would presumably have caused great curiosity. A Le Souef, Personal Recollections of Early Victoria, South Australian Museum, Adelaide. Andrew Porteous and other correspondents in the 1859 Select Committee on the Condition of Aborigines reported their great attraction to 'frequenting the goldfields'. See: Victorian Government, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines,; Together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1859).

Committee that in his district, the "tribes for the last few years have been in the habit of frequenting the various diggings and other townships".[198] Andrew Porteous, Honorary Correspondent in the Ballarat District, reported in 1866 that 'The Mount Emu tribe still prefer to roam about in small bands, from station to station and the various goldfields'[199]. The exotic pull of the goldfields and towns for Aboriginal people seems to have centered on: horse races, fetes, galas, official openings,[200] dances, dress, bazaars, unusual animals and new technologies.[201] John Hunter Kerr, a pastoralist on the goldfields of central Victoria, considered that 'many of the natives were taken at various times to Melbourne and carried to the circus, theatres, or other places of amusement, which must have been as astounding as they were utterly novel to them.'[202] Kerr and others witnessed the appropriation by Aboriginal people of 'solitary articles' from miners for their amusement and 'vanity'[203] and also was privy to see their reactions on a number of occasions to the 'extraordinary and unfamiliar' such as photography[204] and the galvanic battery.

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[198] Quoted in Clark and Cahir, "Aboriginal People, Gold and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria." p.5

[199] ID Clark, The Northern Wathawurrung and Andrew Porteous, 1860-1877 (Ballarat: University of Ballarat, 2001). p.9

[200] William Tomlinson reported that at the opening of the Geelong-Melbourne railway that the procession consisted of 'Mounted troopers, police, soldiers, railway navies, Aborigines...' W Tomlinson, Diary, SLV, Melbourne. 20 September, 1853.

[201] Charles Fead, a miner on the Buchan diggings noted that at the first local race meeting just a few miles from the diggings was Meteoka, a Kurnai, who had been 'holding horses all day and was proud of it; his honest cheery voice could be heard during the races urging on his favourites. See: G Fead, "Notes of an Unsettled Life," Gippsland Heritage Journal 16 (1994). p.35. Likewise, a Djabwurrung woman, 'Lady Sutherland', was known to frequent the Chute races during the mining period. *Riponshire Advocate* 3 Janurary 1885. In 1881 the 'Aboriginal King of Lal Lal was present' at the Lal Lal races. "Lal Lal Falls Races," *Ballarat Star* 3 January 1881. When the train service commenced at Beaufort the *Riponshire Advertiser* reported that Jacky Jacky and his tribe watched the first train go through. *Riponshire Advocate* 28 November 1874.

[202] M Hancock, ed., Glimpses of Life in Victoria by a Resident (Melbourne: MUP, 1996). p.151

[203] Fead noted that Aboriginal people were 'not without vanity and one might occasionally be seen strutting about in a swallow tailed coat or a tall black hat, without another stitch of clothing of any kind. The women too were not a little proud when they could display a parasol and dress improver or, later on, a crinoline for their sole attire. They were fond of looking glasses, bits of finery and scented hair oil.' See: Fead, "Notes of an Unsettled Life." p.27

[204] AB Pierce recounted a humorous tale of the novelty which the first experience of cameras afforded some Aboriginal people in the Serpentine River area in 1863. See: MA Leatherbee, ed., Knocking

> A galvanic battery was shown to a party of blacks, and one of them suffered himself to be experimented upon. He threw down the wires again however in a minute, with a shriek and a laugh which was re-echoed on all sides. Others looked at the mysterious box, but could not be persuaded to try its effects.[205]

Kerr noted some comical instances of Aboriginal peoples' fondness for exotic items to 'adorn their persons with' and noted their great sense of humour and delight in satirizing the non-Indigenous peoples' vanity and pompousness.

> It used to be no uncommon thing to see some swarthy fellow donning a solitary article of clothing, in comical incongruity with his otherwise perfect nudity. A cravat, a hat, or a discarded crinoline, comprised in some instances the whole of the aboriginal toilet, but was nevertheless sported with great pride and exultation. A gentleman who was subject to frequent attacks of bronchitis one day missed his respirator, without he rarely travelled. After much ineffectual search, it was accidentally discovered in the possession of a black "lubra", who had attached it to her head, and had endeavoured to arrange her dark greasy locks over it in imitation of the "chignons" worn by her white sisters.[206]

Fauchery has recounted the encounter of a (presumably) Wathawurrung man at the Ballarat diggings with a band of wandering musicians which highlights the cultural exoticism of the goldfields.

> It was I think, the first time music was heard on the diggings. An agreeable sensation for all, and particularly novel for the natives. Coloured men, women and children were laughing, foaming, twisting in a general fit of epilepsy. [Only one man] kept his dignity, and neglecting the varied ensemble of the orchestra, all his attention was fixed on the trombone...it was this mechanism [of the trombone] above all that aroused the lively interest of the observer...The full extension of the instrument did not over-astonish the black man, but when he saw it drawn back by the instrumentalists hand, go up again, diminish and reduce itself to its simplest proportions he completely lost his head; he touched the brass with his black quivering hands then he came back to the Alsation, on whose person he devoted himself to the most minute researches, opening his coat, thrusting his hands everywhere, but finding nothing. Suddenly he stopped, enveloped in a fiery gaze the musician and the trombone now all of one piece, then struck his forehead and cried, 'he is swallowing it.' And he ran away, waving his arms in the air, and showing signs of the most dreadful despair.[207]

About: Being Some Adventures of Augustus Baker Pierce in Australia (Wangaratta: Shoe String Press, 1984). pp.33-5

[205] Hancock, ed., Glimpses of Life in Victoria by a Resident. p.150

[206] Hancock, ed., Glimpses of Life in Victoria by a Resident. p.150

[207] Fauchery, Letters from a Miner in Australia. p.98. Further example of the exoticism of non-Indigenous music for Aboriginal people was also noted by AB Pierce: They were much interested in Everest's violin and listened to his playing with great pleasure, never having seen or heard such an

The social etiquette of the non-Indigenous mining towns was an exotic experience for some Aboriginal people to be savored as well. Charles Fead, a non-Indigenous miner, recounted meeting up with 'Metoaka, King of the Omeo Blacks' near the diggings, who with great mirth

> told me, in his own way, of the changes that had lately taken place in his little world – of the erection of a bakery, a restaurant, and a public house, and with a merry laugh, - what I already knew – that a number of white gin immigrants, candidates for domestic service, having arrived at Port Albert, a party of diggers and others had gone down and secured wives a few minutes or, at most, a few hours, after they had met them for the first time in their lives. Such marriages were, at that time not uncommon nor was it a very rare thing to meet with men and women who, living as single, had wives or husbands living, they knew not how or where.[208]

The spiritual beliefs of the non-Indigenous miners too were an exotic attraction for Aboriginal people, evidenced by a report in the *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* (8 October, 1857) which described the visit of a Gippsland-based clergyman who had arrived in Omeo to spread the gospel amongst the miners. Accepting the hospitality of a miner, the cleric became the centre of much attention, and amongst the miners who came to see the cleric was a 'group of aborigines from the Warrajabaree tribe [Wiradjuri?], both men and women, proudly wearing their birthday suits'.[209]

The exoticism of the goldfields cut both ways. Aboriginal people moved quickly to acquire and see the wonderful contrivances and share in the plentiful goods which abounded on the diggings and the townships. The insistent claims on miners, a frequent occurrence remarked upon by many writers and social commentators on the

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instrument before. They would approach him with curiosity and examine it carefully, remarking, "Takem box, waddy rub him back, makim noise all same him possum." Leatherbee, ed., Knocking About: Being Some Adventures of Augustus Baker Pierce in Australia.p.63. Also see M Ragless, ed., Oliver's Diary: An 'Andkerchief of Eirth (Hawthorndene: Investigator Press, 1986). p.17

[208] Fead, "Notes of an Unsettled Life." p.34

[209] *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* 8 October 1857.

goldfields often construed as begging, was more likely an attempt by clans to obligate non-Indigenous people to rightfully share their possessions with their clan folk.[210] This was a practice Clark argues[211] that had been utilized by Aboriginal people in the pastoral period in an attempt to assimilate them into their social organization. There is evidence that a number of Aboriginal people on the Victorian goldfields suffered intermittent destitution, but an overwhelming body of evidence strongly points to the motive for Aboriginal people soliciting in this period to be one not primarily driven by poverty alone. Certainly there were occasional reports of Aboriginal people being hard up for food, clothing and shelter, but most of the evidence points to the fact that Aboriginal people were largely self sufficient, and when moments of poverty occurred, implored their white brethren for meaningful paid work and keep, rather than simply begging for food and money. A report in the *Grenville Advocate* (2 September 1862) and relayed in *The Argus* pointed out to its readers the unusual occurrence in Linton (Victorian central highlands) of the local Wathawurrung clan who, having a hard winter, gained employment using their traditional skills for a local aboriculturalist.

> The Mount Emu tribe of aboriginals must have been pretty hard pinched for food this winter as they were never before known to be so keen to get employment from Europeans as they have shown themselves this season at Linton. A gentleman of that town...has engaged the tribe to carve him some light-wood uprights for an alcove, as the timber sheds the bark. It is intended that the carved designs will represent a serpentine coil, similar to that on the shields that the chiefs of the tribe use in times of warfare.[212]

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[210] Miner Antoine Fauchery, wrote at length about a Wathawurrung man and his three wives who 'skilfully defeated me in a relentless and obstinate battle that went on for not less that two hours.' Fauchery was maddened and confounded by their stubborn begging for some food and wondered 'Had I undergone some magnetic influence?' See: Fauchery, Letters from a Miner in Australia. pp.96-8. Christiakov, a Russian 'arm chair' writer plagiarized Fauchery's story of the beggar, and thus reinforced the stereotype of the 'obstinacy of a savage'. See: M Chistiakov, Tales from a Journey through Australia (St Petersburg: Unknown, 1874).; H Gray, Letters, NLA MS, Canberra. T Pierson, Diaries, SLV, Melbourne.; Tame, Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings.; Thomas, Autobiography.; White, Letters.; J Dannock`, Autobiography, NLA MS, Canberra.

[211] I Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria (Melbourne: Heritage Matters, 2003). pp.191-2

[212] Grenville Advocate, "The Aboriginals," *Argus* 1862.

A poorly researched yet fundamental response by Aboriginal people in nineteenth century Victoria to the British colonizers was to incorporate non-Indigenous people into their kinship networks and thus call to mind their right to resources that were being unjustly denied them by non-Indigenous people (including miners). Many correspondents in the colonial period such as Foster Fyans, Police Magistrate at Geelong in the 1840s, had had opportunities to observe closely the strict adherence Aboriginal people in Victoria paid to equality amongst themselves and to ritualized gift giving. Fyans, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, attempted to explain that an incensed crowd of Wathawurrung clans people besieging Fyan's office was not imploring (begging) the Colonial government for food and blankets, they were *insisting* upon it as their right.[213] A number of pastoralists and public servants, albeit couched in paternalistic fashion, also reported that they were informed by Aboriginal people that by virtue of their ascribed familial ties, they had moral responsibilities to provide materially for their new 'country men and women'[214].

It is difficult to discern how much of this invoking of kinship ties, as described by miner Walter Bridges at Buninyong (central Victoria), had as much to do with opportunism and how much with the cultural rituals of sharing one's goods.

> My mother and wife and small boy that come out from England with us was standing at the tent one day all alone, no other tents near when they saw a mob of native Blacks and Lubrias [lubras] and a mob of dogs with them come across the gully so my wife said to Mother what ever will we do now so Mother said we must stand our ground and face them for there is no get away So up they come yabbering good day Missie You my countary [country] woman now. My

[213] Foster Fyans to Colonial Secretary, 7 March 1839 in M Cannon, ed., Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835-1839 (Melbourne: VGPO, 1982). p.199

[214] GA Robinson noted visiting many pastoral stations where Aboriginal people were present who recognized non-Indigenous people as resuscitated clans' people and subsequently entered into customary reciprocal arrangements with them. See: Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. p.187. Colin Campbell commented upon this phenomena in the 1850s. See Campbell in: Bride, ed., Letters from Victorian Pioneers.

> mother had to be spoksman [spokeswoman] the Blacks said You gotum needle missie you gotum thread you Gotum tea you Gotum sugar you Gotum Bacca [tobacco]. So Mother had to say yes to get rid of them and had to give them all they asked for to get rid of them. That was what was called the Bunyong [Buninyong] tribe and when they left they gave their usual salute. Goodbye missie and thankfull enough they was to see them disappear off into the bush.[215]

A number of miners reported relationships forming in spite of their prejudices towards Aboriginal people and recognized that some Aboriginal people were in dire need of sustenance. Jewish miner, Abraham Abrahamsohn set up a 'bakery on a high hill 'in July 1853 (Bakery Hill?) on the 'Jurika [Eureka] mines near Pallrad [Ballarat]' and wrote 'The negroid aborigines or Papua, visited me and begged for bread' and to a 'hungry, thin, already elderly Papu, I had several times given some of my scanty store of bread and meat and a drink from my bottle of whisky, so necessary in this swamp.' It appears that he was surprised by his own good will adding 'I had even given a chain of glass beads to his young wife. I did this from an unconscious liking for the black man.'[216] Some time later Abrahamsohn had reason to be thankful for his good works towards the 'elderly Papua' as he was visited in an urgent manner by the Aboriginal man and told:

> to expect an attack from one of his own people who was bigger than he, and I immediately recalled an unusually big rascal, built only of bone and sinew, whom I had caught the day before stealing a knife, and had thoroughly beaten up. I was not exactly comfortable in my isolation, and I was overcome with horror to think that when dead, I would make a meal for him and his friends.[217]

Other accounts such as James Goonan's are suggestive of an inquisitive and relationship seeking behaviour rather than a response driven from hunger. Goonan recalled: 'My mother's people lived in 1854, not far from (now) Yackadandah, and one of the black aboriginal tribe often came to beg a pinch of salt or a bit o' bread',

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[215] W Bridges, The Travels of Walter Bridges, Travelogue, Ballarat.
[216] M Kellerman, "Interesting Account of the Travels of Abraham Abrahamsohn," Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal 7 (1974). pp.487-8
[217] Kellerman, "Interesting Account of the Travels of Abraham Abrahamsohn." p.498

and adding that 'they were fond of novelties.'[218] It is possible too that Aboriginal people were emulating the "hoards" of non-Indigenous beggars euphemistically known as 'sundowners' or 'travellers' who depended on squatters and small land holder's bush hospitality for shelter and sustenance. JH Kerr, a pastoralist on the Loddon River, recalled that "On my station on the Loddon [circa 1850s], it was no unusual circumstance for twenty, or even thirty of such heterogeneous guests to arrive on one night; while the monthly average rarely fell below 130. Large stations were favoured with greater numbers, all of whom were provided with the staple fare of the Bush – tea, sugar, bread and beef."[219] JC Hamilton's experience of 'begging' in western Victoria would strongly suggest there was a duality to their behaviour, that is, Aboriginal people were practicing 'intelligent parasitism' because of real material needs, and at the same time pricking the memory of their white brothers and sisters of their time-honored responsibilities to share equally. Hamilton recounted with great fondness a friendship which had spanned several decades, whereby an Aboriginal man only identified as "Jacky" had adopted Hamilton, when he was a youth, into his family[220] and explained the varying greetings he received from Jacky.

> Jacky became a shepherd for my father, and we were much together. In after years [during the gold rush] if Jacky met me at a township he would come to me with a beaming face, shake hands and say, "Where is my sixpence, Mr. Hamilton?" but if he met me in the bush his salutation was, "Halloa Jim."[221]

The emphasis in Hamilton's experience was clearly on reminding and maintaining kinship affinities, rather than an opportunist seizing onto an easy earner. The

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[218] M Ronan, ed., Early Dederang 1854-1956 from the Notebook of Micheal James Goonan (Melbourne: Macron, 2004). p.10

[219] Hancock, ed., Glimpses of Life in Victoria by a Resident. p.164. For further discussion of this phenomenon see: I Clark and D Cahir, "The Comfort of Strangers: Hospitality on the Victorian Goldfields, 1850-60," unpublished (2006).

[220] Hamilton had been identified as a *ngamadjidj* or a resuscitated Aboriginal clans man and thus is a vital clue to what is transpiring. For further discussion see: I Clark, "Understanding the Enemy - Ngmmadjidj or Foreign Invader? Aboriginal Perceptions of Europeans in 19th Century Western Victoria," Department of Management Working Paper Series Working paper 73/98 (1998).

[221] JC Hamilton, Pioneering Days in Western Victoria (Kowree: Shire of Kowree, c. 1912).

continuing incidence of Aboriginal people during the gold period 'claiming' tribute from non-Indigenous people of rank and position may suggest that Aboriginal people still viewed recompense for (and acknowledgement of) their land being usurped as integral, and that 'gentlemen' visitors to the goldfields were an opportunity to seek redress.[222]

The exotic attractiveness of Aboriginal people to the new immigrant miners often centered on their corroborees, weapons, battles, apparel or lack of, physique, spiritual beliefs, artifacts and athletic prowess. Alexander Finlay, a gold miner on the Bendigo fields in September 1852 marveled at their ingenuity with a boomerang and skill at ascending trees.

> Met in with several of the native blacks, got them to throw the boomerang for a shilling. One with fine muscular form and European features very good at it. One of them was making one with a tomahawk which he seemed to use with perfect skill and ease. We advised the leader to go up a tree for an opossum...His use of the tomahawk, his to us, fearful agility going up and perfect ease with which he walked on the naked boughs, well worth the little time we devoted for our amusement. Two of the men spoke English well. The women were strangely dressed with a blanket over all.[223]

Many miners expressed incredulousness at the feats which Aboriginal people could make their famed boomerang perform or the unerring accuracy of their spears.[224] Elizabeth Ramsay Laye wrote 'The feats they perform with the boomerang are most

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[222] Many examples exist of Aboriginal people declaring their title to a suite of civil rights. Equinehup, a Djadjawurrung man, formally petitioned colonial authorities (Railway Commissioners) expressing his claim to original land title. Maldon 28th July 1887, cited in W Evans, ed., Diary of a Welsh Swagman, 1869-1898 (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977). p.156. In 1876 Dicky, a Wathawurrung elder at Lal Lal, near Ballarat complained to some miners that they had 'robbed him of Lal Lal which was his inheritance and collected several shillings compensation. Unknown, "Lal Lal," *Ballarat Star* 1876. In April 1879, 'King Tommy', a Djadjawurrung, came to Baringup to meet the Governor, Sir George Bowen to speak of the old days, and was subsequently given money. See: Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings. p.3. Similarly, a (presumably) Wathawurrung man presented himself to an Admiral on the first Geelong-Melbourne train service seeking redress. See: J Carter, Eyes to the Future: Sketches of Australia and Her Neighbours in the 1870s (Canberra: National Library of Australia). p.75. For further discussion see: Cahir and Clark, "'Why Should We Pay Money to the Queen?' the Aboriginal Side of Eureka."

[223] A Finlay, The Journal of Alexander Finlay at the Victorian Gold Diggings (Sydney: St Marks Press, 1992). p.36

[224] Pierson, Diaries.

astonishing...This wonder must be seen to be believed.'[225] Edwin Price, a miner at the Ballarat fields was agog at their ability with their 'long slender canes tipped with bone with which they can hit a penny piece 50 yards off and can drive them through a man's body' and also how their boomerangs move at 'the speed of lightning, and if aimed true, hitting its victim with an irresistible force.'[226] George Wakefield, a surgeon on the Ballarat diggings wrote to his parents of his captivation with the Aboriginal people at Ballarat (presumably Wathawurrung).

> The population too would astonish a few, here we have representations of nearly all the nations on the face of the globe, not the least wonderful of which is the Aboriginal nation. I have frequently been present at their corroborees, and their skill in throwing the spear and boomerang is wonderful. I saw the boomerang thrown yesterday, it went completely out of sight and in about 5 minutes returned at the feet of the thrower.[227]

Lawrence Struilby witnessed a 'native wing a flying bird with it fully fifty yards off; and the bird had scarcely fallen to the ground, when the boomerang, in its recoil, buried itself four inches deep inside the ground near the projector.'[228] Francois Journet considered 'it is quite impressive that these natives had the idea of this bizarre instrument'.[229] Thomas Martin, a school child on the goldfields of Newstead in central Victoria in the 1850s, vividly recalled their hunting and fishing prowess, their eclectic fashion sense, enigmatic characters and bush foods.

> The blacks were plentiful. They used to come and camp near the school at times. They used to get half our dinners...One big rough old fellow with bushy hair and long whiskers used to come with them. He was a cross fellow. We were frightened of him. He lost his old hat at the pub and my father gave him an old bell topper which he wore for a month. The men were rather lazy. They used to catch a possum and save the skins. They used to fish in the Loddon and catch

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[225] E Ramsay-Laye, Social Life and Manners in Australia (London: Longman and Green, 1861). p.60

[226] E Price, Letters, NLA MS, Canberra.JD Mereweather observed a 'black speared a platypus as it was swimming in the river close to where I was. It requires great cunning and dexterity to do this.' Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. pp.156-7

[227] 1 May, 1856 G Wakefield, Letters, NLA MS, Canberra.

[228] J Graham, ed., Observations and Experiences During 25 Years of Bush Life in Australia (London: Book Society, 1863). p.134

[229] Journet, L'australie: Description Du Pays.p.336. Middleton also expressed the same sentiments in: E Middleton, A Description of the Life and Times in Victoria in the 1860's by a Young Colonist, Reminiscences, Melbourne. p.49

> some nice fish. They used to spear them and sell some of them cheap to get tobacco...The old men used to eat white wood grubs and possums flesh and bread. They would through [throw] spears at the fish in the Loddon and seldom miss. I saw a fish caught in the Loddon which weighed 53 lbs, by a man called Mr. Ball. He got a barrow and took it to the school for the children to see.[230]

Striking adornments, as witnessed by Eveleigh Johns in 1851, on an unidentified Victorian goldfield, also punctuated a number of goldfield records: 'Davy saw the other day at the wurlies a black woman ornamented in a manner that I never heard of before. She had kangaroo teeth driven into the flesh above the nails forming a complete set of claws.'[231] Frenchman C Brout also was astounded by coats made from platypus skins and necklaces 'made of reeds cut into short pieces, through which threads – also taken from kangaroos' tails – are passed. It is not rare to see necklaces that are eighty to one hundred metres long.'[232] Goldfields newspapers frequently reported on 'native oddities' or merely a clan's presence in town would occasion a news report of their goings on. A report in the *Dunolly Express* of September 1862 is typical: 'The Aborigines have for the last few days been arriving in this locality in considerable numbers. On Saturday and yesterday (Sunday) they were holding corroborees in South Dunolly...'[233] News articles reporting on corroborees being held on the goldfields music halls,[234] cricket ovals, Mechanics Institutes, hotels, theatres, racecourses, parks, gardens and streets were very common in gold mining town newspapers. An interesting example of this visitation occurred in the central Victorian town of Inglewood on 2 May 1865.

> Natives. Inglewood is now honored with the presence of a body of natives, male and female, who have come down from their native river, the Murray, to see

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[230] T Martin, Early History of Newstead District, Reminiscences, SLV MS, Melbourne.
[231] R Johns, Papers, SLV Ms, Melbourne.
[232] Brout, Guide for Emigrants to the Australian Gold Mines. pp.18-21
[233] Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings. p.6
[234] Corroborees, Flett noted were held at the gold rush towns of Lamplough and Scandinavian Rush (Talbot) in the music halls. Flett, Maryborough. p.4

> their white brethren inhabiting this town...Last night they held a grand corroboree, which was quite a success, and attracted many visitors.[235]

It is apparent from some reports the exoticism was double-edged, that is to say it is apparent there was fascination and awe emanating from both non-Indigenous and Aboriginal people about their respective cultures.[236] Demonstrations of boomerang (and spear) throwing were also deemed sufficiently striking to warrant newspaper worthiness.[237] Likewise, battles between Aboriginal groups attracted great interest.[238] The mere presence in town of Aboriginal people dressed in traditional possum skin robes attending a 'Fancy Bazaar' occasioned a report in the *Ballarat Times* in 1856. Various newspaper correspondents such as one in the *Mount Alexander Mail* in 1862 frequently referred to certain Indigenous 'notables' as 'familiar figure[s] to the diggers'.[239] In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, newspapers occasionally[240] carried stories from 'Old timers' reminiscing about the golden days, often commenting on the colorfulness and exoticness of Aborigines. A series of articles in the *Wedderburn Express* in 1888 on the history of the Wedderburn goldfields is typical of this treatment:

> During the early days of Wedderburn we had frequent visits of aborigines from the Avoca, Loddon and Murray Rivers. It was no uncommon occurrence to see twenty or thirty in one party as late as 1855 or '56, and on one occasion I remember seeing fully three hundred collect on the Racecourse one Sunday where they had a genuine battle. There was not one killed on that occasion,

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[235] Nixon, Inglewood Gold. p.37

[236] M McGivern, Big Camp Wahgunyah: History of the Rutherglen District (Melbourne: Spectrum, 1983). p.126

[237] "Lal Lal Falls Races."

[238] A battle between rival clans was reported in the *Wedderburn Express* cited in F Cusack, ed., The History of the Wedderburn Goldfields (Carlton: Queensberry Hill Press, 1981). Pp.18-19. Also see: Banfield, Like the Ark: The Story of Ararat, Graham, ed., Observations and Experiences During 25 Years of Bush Life in Australia, R Mackay, Recollections of Early Gippsland Goldfields (Traralgon: W.Chappell, 1916), CE Sayers, ed., Western Victoria- the Narrative of an Educational Tour in 1857 (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1970), R Stanthorpe, Reminiscences, NLA MS, Canberra, Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fourth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria (Melbourne: Victoria Parliament, 1864).

[239] Anonymous, "Mysterious Murder," *Mount Alexander Mail* 4 July 1862.

[240] G Roulston, Reminiscences of History of Early Dandenong (Dandenong: Dandenong Journal, 1984).

> although several got some nasty wounds, but on several other occasions one or more were killed in their drunken rows. Very many people have formed a very unfavorable opinion of the Australian blackfellow, as he is called, but I can safely affirm that they were the most inoffensive savages I have ever met...Among the whole number visiting Korong I never heard of but one who was ever accused of stealing and that one was fully civilized, having been in the Police Force for five years.[241]

Aboriginal people were often invited or summoned to perform for notable visitors such as the Duke of Edinburgh, the Governor Sir George Bowen, or commemorative events such as the opening of railways or regattas to add an air of 'authenticity' and 'novelty'.[242] A representative example of this reverse exoticism is evident in the aspirations by the Buninyong Council who in requesting the Governor to insert Buninyong in the programme of places to be visited by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh on his arrival in the Colony in 1867 urged:

> as a plea for the privilege. That Buninyong is the oldest inland town in the Colony, and the site of the first discovery of gold in Victoria. They have also considered that a corroboree of the Aboriginals would be a novelty to his Royal Highness, and have made arrangements for a large gathering of the Natives for that purpose.[243]

On occasions Aboriginal people were 'got up' for non-Indigenous celebrations such as the celebrations marking the Geelong to Melbourne railway opening in September 1853. To mark the occasion a 'procession formed in the Market Square [Geelong] consisting of Mounted Troopers, Police, Soldiers, Railway Navvies, Aborigines, Odd fellows, Laborers, Schools, trades, etc...'[244] Even in the world of theatre stage plays, the presence of Aboriginal people was deemed sufficiently important to display on the

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[241] Cusack, ed., The History of the Wedderburn Goldfields.
[242] Historian James Flett posits that at the opening of the railway at Dunolly 'King Tommy', a Djadjawurrung elder served as a 'symbol' as he appeared with a banner on a long pole and danced in front of the engine. See Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings. p.8
[243] E Netell, Town Clerks Correspondence, Letters, Letters From the Town Clerk, Buninyong.
[244] Tomlinson, Diary. 20 September, 1853.

bill-boards. 'Off to the Diggings!' a play in London theatres in 1857 featured 'Kikogofatto: A Real' Native'.[245]

Divergent opinions of the celebrated corroboree also abounded. Whilst large crowds of enthusiastic spectators thronged to watch corroborees on the goldfields, many such as Emily Skinner were disparaging of such events.

> We came upon a large party of Aborigines at one place, Longwood I think, and they were holding a corroboree, I was told. Certainly they made noise enough. Their dancing and antics were dreadfully grotesque during the short time I watched them. They kept it up till far into the night...They seemed a very miserable degraded people.[246]

Korzelinski opined that it was not in the miner's interest to have Aboriginal people as neighbours at nighttime.

> It is not very pleasant to have a blackfellows' camp in close vicinity. On a moonlit night there is no rest for they make a lot of noise and scream in a particular way. Possibly it has a religious significance – a worship of the moon perhaps, or it could be that the *cradje* was giving talismans away. It's hard to say. Tired as laws after a hard day's digging, I was not prepared to flit through the bush at night in the hope of learning some of the natives' habits and ceremonies. [247]

A miner at Canadian Gully on the Ballarat goldfield in November 1852 shared Korzelinski's critique: 'Occasionally we came upon an encampment of natives, whose inharmonious yells sounded like anything but a kindly greeting to the wayfarer.'[248] William Craig, a miner at Mt Cole, wanting to be away from the noise and revelry that prevailed at the grog shanty, decided to camp some distance from the diggings only to find that the 'blacks squatted down within a few chains of us, and made night hideous with their barbarous orgies.'[249]

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[245] P O'Shaughnessy, G Inson and R Ward, The Restless Years (Melbourne: Jacaranda Press, 1968). p.85. For examples of reverse exoticism see: G Dunderdale, The Book of the Bush (Ringwood: Penguin Books Ltd, 1973). p.190. Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings. p.3. Carter, Eyes to the Future: Sketches of Australia and Her Neighbours in the 1870s. pp.74-5

[246] Duyker, ed., A Woman on the Goldfields: Recollections of Emily Skinner, 1854-1878. p.45

[247] Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. p.122

[248] M Mossman, Letters, SLV MS, Melbourne. p.57

[249] Craig, My Adventures on the Australian Goldfields. p.285

A humorous goldfields' story narrated by Frank Shellard titled 'The Merry Wives of Omeo' is indicative of the curious exotica that abounded from both sides of the cultural divide.

> The colored ladies enjoyed it [the grand annual ball] amazingly, all the windows and doors were thrown open and the spaces were filled with black grinning faces. King Billy was in full dress, with a red night cap on his head and a red scarf around his neck, and a short white starched shirt on with his brass plate round his neck but he was dressed no further. His Queen had on her fancy costume but she did not create such a sensation as her consort. The chief feature of the ball was when the King and Queen gave a native dance in the ball room for they very much frightened their white sisters as they had never seen anything like it in their lives, the noise they made and their scantiness of their costumes with the absence of any shyness on the parts of the dancers in exposing their limbs fairly astounded their white sisters and as nobody could get out of the hall the poor young wives had to sit [it] out in terror of the blacks and it will never be forgotten by them.[250]

This chapter has sought to consider the attractions for Aboriginal people of the Victorian goldfields. It is evident that the goldfields were places frequented by Aboriginal people and that the attractiveness of the goldfields for Aboriginal people was a dynamic which could not be said to be uniform from one goldfield to another. These perceptions are obviously interpreted through at times extremely ethnocentric lenses, but nevertheless they demonstrate that for Aboriginal people the goldfields proved to be places which intermittently delighted the pocket and the senses.

It has been noted by many goldfields historians that Victorian goldfields society was a tremendous crucible of eclectic communities, a global village, which to a great degree transcended social and race barriers rarely seen before, and as such was a terrific potpourri of sensations that had to be experienced to be believed. This chapter has clearly shown that Aboriginal culture and lifestyles were an integral part of the goldfields' cultural experience for many miners, evidenced by miners' correspondence, artwork and newspaper reports of the day. Whilst the exoticism

[250] F Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger, NLA MS, Canberra.

clearly applied both ways, it was the Aboriginal peoples' ability to skillfully find gold that naturally attracted the greatest excitement for both the finder and the observer, and this is a theme taken up in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: DISCOVERERS AND GENERAL FOSSICKING FOR GOLD

The discovery, but not the acknowledgement in history texts, of new goldfields by Aboriginal people has become a recurrent theme in Australian gold history. Indigenous historian Robyne Bancroft, in her study of the northern NSW goldfields, argued that whilst Aboriginal miners and prospectors are included among the pioneers in the newspaper reports of the gold period they 'did not receive fair treatment regarding their mineral finds'. This inattention by goldfields writers is remarkable considering the score of primary documents which testify to the very active participatory role Indigenous people assumed in the gold mining period. Bancroft concludes that the role of Aboriginal miners has been neglected, and it would be difficult to disagree with her. This inattentiveness to indigenous detail by many historians is puzzling. The documentary record is not reticent in this regard. There is no lack of evidence pointing to the hefty involvement of Aboriginal people on the goldfields of mainland Australia. Yet rarely do Aboriginal people win accolades or even explicit acknowledgement by non-indigenous local historians.

This chapter shall demonstrate the at times pivotal role Aboriginal people played in the discovery of new goldfields and their considerable participation as independent gold seekers. It also seeks to contribute to the discussion of the level and nature of relationships which were brokered with non-Indigenous miners both from a sexual and labour perspective. In addition it briefly surveys the extent of their involvement as miners in foreign lands, immigrant Aboriginal miners to Victoria from other parts of Australia, Maori miners in Victoria and Aboriginal perceptions of Chinese miners.

Eyewitness observations from a number of historical sources reveal that several diggings were initially discovered by Aboriginal people. Paul Gootch, a non-Indigenous miner at Ballarat, recorded how the rich Eureka Diggings at Ballarat were discovered by an unidentified presumably Wathawurrung person.[251] Likewise, Joseph Parker, the son of Assistant Protector of Aborigines Edward Parker, claimed that: "The first gold in the district [the Loddon valley] was discovered in 1849 by an aboriginal boy in picking up what he supposed to be a stone to throw at a wounded parrot, but it turned out to be a nugget of gold! A European shepherd secured it and kept it secret for two years."[252]

A plethora of 'how to' books was spawned by the discovery of gold. Writers conveyed to prospective gold diggers the merits and pitfalls of various goldfields and what to take with you into the bush. Many goldfield promoters discussed the 'Native population' of Australia, and miners such as Charles Ferguson, mining at Linton (south of Ballarat) acknowledged the integral role that Wathawurrung people had played in miners' quest for gold.[253] Moreover, there are miners' accounts recorded in local histories which speak of Indigenous gold miners who struck out successfully on their own. One humorous account which reveals the envy displayed towards successful Aboriginal miners was recorded by Jonathan Moon, who published a short history of Maldon in 1864:

> Time and again a member of the tribe would drop in at a local bank to sell a parcel of gold. Knowing ones about town got to hear of this, and considerable manoeuvring went on to win over the confidence of the seller. The blacks maybe were on a "good thing" unknown to all others.
> The day came when a certain slick townsman invited Jackie for a ride, and in gleeful anticipation the pair drove off into the country. The merry travellers lubricated at every pub on the way and finally arrived at Newstead. A couple

[251] P Gootch, "Canadian and Prince Regent Gullies," *Geelong Advertiser* 10 September 1852.
[252] E Morrison, The Loddon Aborigines 'Tales of Old Jim Crow' (Yandoit: Morrison, 1971). p.51.
[253] C Ferguson, Experiences of a Forty-Niner in Australia and New Zealand (Melbourne: Gaston Renard, 1979).

more drinks, then the driver got down to business on Jackie who was thoroughly enjoying himself.
'You a very fine fellow Jackie." Jackie agreed with a wide grin. "You sell em plenty gold?" "Yes, Boss." "Now you tell me where you get the gold and I like you very much." Jackie unabashed and apparently not a bit stupid with liquor, immediately replied: "Boss, blackfellow no b_____ fool!"[254]

Most however are generalised testimonies of anonymous Indigenous gold seekers. Typical of this record is an account of the diggings in the Evansford district (central Victoria). One digger noted the 'natives learned the value of gold and they soon became searchers for the precious metal'.[255] In 1853 JF Hughes, a digger at Porcupine Flat (near Maldon), wrote that: 'Among those gold-seekers might have been found representatives of nearly every phase of human society ... [including] ... the Aboriginal'.[256] Similarly William Howitt, writing of the would-be reformists on the Ballarat goldfields and their design for a 'diggers flag', thought that the 'native blacks' flag should also be represented as 'there were several'.[257] Other miners such as William Tomlinson saw Aboriginal people setting off for the diggings from town centres like Geelong: 'I yesterday saw five of the natives in town, they wore blankets over them like shawls. They had all sticks with them. They are perfectly black and very quiet they appear. I saw four of them starting for the diggings this afternoon.'[258]

On their own account

It was not long after the initial discoveries of Victorian alluvial gold that reports of Aboriginal fossickers occurred with some frequency in both newspaper reports and published accounts of the diggings. There were prolific reports of Aboriginal people

[254] AJ Williams, A Concise History of Maldon and the Tarrangower Diggings (Maldon: Tarrangower Times, 1987). p.69
[255] Unknown, Evansford History, NLA MS, Canberra.
[256] JF Hughes in Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers (Melbourne: Rigby, 1972). p.4
[257] Quoted in Keesing, ed., History of the Australian Gold Rushes. p.210
[258] Tomlinson, Diary. 7 December, 1852.

forming their own successful gold mining parties across Victoria, and also throughout the mainland states of Australia. The Native Police Corps, who were at first the only police force on the diggings and had prospected for gold at Daisy Hill themselves in 1849, were leaving the force as gold seeking was more attractive. So alluring were the diggings for Aboriginal people that Superintendent of the Native Police Corps, Henry Dana, wrote to Governor La Trobe informing him that he was finding it difficult in May 1852 to prevent the Aboriginal troopers from leaving, and also had trouble attracting new members due to the wealth that they could obtain either working for pastoralists or prospecting for gold.

> I have now the greatest difficulty in keeping the Troopers of the Native Police from absconding from the Service...I have endeavoured to induce others to join, but I find them mostly unwilling to do so which I can only account for from the facility they now have of making money, by working for the Settlers, and also from their frequenting the Gold Workings.'[259]

Some surprise was often evinced that Aboriginal people would show commercial enterprise as it was felt that 'the labor of digging and washing was not of a nature to suit their habits'.

> There was a camp of blacks [presumably Djadjawurrung people] camped at Myer's Flat [at Bendigo in 1852] they could be seen picking up gold from the red clay and heaps of mullock around the holes. Each one would get a few pennyweights and one called Peter (more civilized than the rest), who had been a bullock driver on a station, could show a few good ounces of gold in a chamois –leather bag, with which he made a trip to Melbourne and imitating the example of a good many of his white brethren, got rid of it in a few days and returned to look for more.[260]

At Castlemaine in 1862 similar observations were reported of a by now very savvy group of Djadjawurrung gold fossickers:

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[259] C Stone, "Researching Native Police Records at PROV," Proactive (June, 2005).
[260] Clarke in Cusack, ed., Early Days on Bendigo. p.39

> Aboriginal Fossickers – We noticed the other day a party of native men and women fossicking about the old holes in one of our gullies. Their keenness of sight enables them to detect particles of gold that would escape the observation of most Europeans...Though too much adverse to steady labor to dig himself for the root of all evil, and probably thinking the white fellow a fool for doing so, the black man does not disdain the yellow dust, when he can procure it for the trouble of picking it up.[261]

Frequent serendipitous finds by Aboriginal people also occurred as this report in the *Argus* (10 July 1860) attests:

> Unconsidered Trifles. – On Wednesday morning, as two black "gins" were wending their way over some of the old workings near Kingower, the hawk-eyes of one of them discovered a shining particle among the debris on the top of one of the holes. On pursuing the investigation , a nice little trifle, in the shape of a seven ounce nugget, rewarded their care. This they speedily converted into the more ordinary circulating medium, and a portion of that into what they considered to be necessary appliances for a bush life.[262]

Other reports also locate Aboriginal people fossicking for gold over an extended period of time. An inquest held into the death of Fanny Simpson, a Djadjawurrung woman in March 1865 was told 'The Loddon natives had been some time fossicking at Daisy Hill.'[263] At a later inquest into Eliza, a Djadjawurrung woman, at Maryborough in 1872, 'Mary Jane (half caste)' deposed: 'I know deceased Eliza good many years and travel with her everywhere and camp out under the trees and bushes. Sometimes I get gold finding it on top of the Pipe clay. When hard up I beg.'[264] This independent yet intermittent style of gold seeking would tend to suggest that there were large degrees of moving in and out of gold mining work at will, a practice that echoed to a large degree their urban work experience and their pastoral work experience.

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[261] Anonymous, "Aboriginal Fossickers," *Mount Alexander Mail* 21 March 1862.
[262] "Unconsidered Trifles," *Argus* 10 July 1860.
[263] Inquest cited in Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria. p.149
[264] SC Fahey, Inquest Deposition Files, Public Records Office of Victoria, Melbourne.

Clark and Cahir have noted that in Victoria, at least, there is abundant evidence that gold brought many economic opportunities that had not been available during the squatting period and many Aboriginal people took advantage of these changed circumstances.[265] Traveller James Bonwick described an encounter with a newly materially rich Djadjawurrung group which exemplifies and confirms numerous similar accounts of their Indigenous roving and independent lifestyle.

> Even the Aborigines are wealthy. I met a party of them at Bullock Ck well clothed, with a good supply of food, new cooking utensils and money in their pockets. One remarked with a becoming expression of dignity "me no poor blackfellow now, me plenty rich blackfellow"[266]

Other observers recorded a proliferation of independent gold mining by Aboriginal people on various goldfields. Some reports were of a sizeable nature and emphasized Aboriginal searches for gold were of a sustained nature.

> During the winter of 1862, the aborigines of the Loddon [Djadjawurrung] were in the habit of visiting the township frequently and disposing of gold that evidently had come from some reef. They were solicited to point out the spot from whence they took it, and they assented, but led the messengers who went with them far away from the scene of their discovery. At length they were tracked by a couple of miners from Pegleg gully, who are reported to have found a large body of natives busy knocking out stone from a reef somewhere towards that known as Fentiman's.[267]

> One of their number (Djabwurrung near Mt Cole) had discovered on a neighbouring hill the previous evening a valuable specimen, half quartz, half gold, weighing some seven oz's...it was a common practice of the aborigines to search heaps of *debris* near shafts that had become exposed by heavy rains.[268]

> I have had a visit from all the (Djadjawurrung) tribe every day – they bring me small quantities of gold which they pick up from the surface.[269]

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[265] Clark and Cahir, "Aboriginal People, Gold and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria."
[266] J Bonwick, Notes of a Gold Digger and Gold Digger's Guide (Melbourne: Connebee, 1852).
[267] JA Patterson, The Gold Fields of Victoria in 1862 (Melbourne: Robertson, 1862). Pp.116-7.
[268] Craig, My Adventures on the Australian Goldfields.
[269] Rowe, Correspondence.

A selection of articles, reproduced below, spanning across eight years (1862-70) in Victorian central highlands newspapers clearly demonstrates not just a heightened aptitude for finding gold existed among Djadjawurrung people, but also a commercial attitude was prevalent as well.

> A party of aborigines on Wednesday sold a very handsome nugget to Messrs. Warnook Brothers; it was slightly intermixed with quartz, and weighed 7oz. 15dwt, which had been in a hole...The blackfellows were evidently in high glee at their luck. [*Tarrengower Times*, 27 June 1862][270]

> A party of aborigines had a windfall the other day near Talbot, in the shape of nuggets. Walking over the old ground in Blacksmith Gully, they picked up two nuggets, one weighing a trifle over 1lb, and the other about 1oz. 2dwt. These nuggets had evidently been thrown up from some of the neighbouring claims by the original workers. "Possessed of so much wealth, viz., 51 pounds 14 shillings" says the [Talbot] *Leader*, "the party proceeded to invest themselves in black suits and bell-toppers, and having thus dressed themselves, they swaggered about Amhearst, cutting such airs as to greatly amuse everyone who chanced to see them. The last time they were seen they were trying to make a bargain with Mr Harling for the purchase of a buggy, but the price being beyond their means, taking into consideration the outlay for black suits and bell toppers, they at last requested the loan of a horse and buggy to drive into Talbot, but their wish in this request it appears no one would gratify." [reported in *The Argus*, 26 July 1864][271]

> The *Daylesford Mercury* remarks that a small party of aborigines, the remnant, and a very sickly one too, of the Daisy Hill tribe, on Saturday picked up a nugget weighing two ounces on Amherst Flat.[272]

> We are indebted to the *Talbot Leader* for the following interesting incident: Our readers will remember the paragraph which appeared in our last issue, notifying that a party of aborigines had found a thirty-ounce nugget at the Emu. This gold realised about 120 pounds for them.[273]

> "The Aborigines of this district" says the *Talbot Leader*, "seem to have a peculiar faculty for picking up valuable nuggets of gold. On Thursday, the remnant of the Daisy Hill tribe, while wandering about the old holes in Blacksmiths Gully, Amherst, picked up a nugget weighing six ounces. Mr Douglas of that town, having changed their gold for notes, the party spent about half of the cash upon new clothes, and adjourned with the balance into the bush."[274]

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[270] Tarrengower Times, "A Lucky Find," *Argus* 30 June 1862.
[271] *Talbot Leader*, *Argus* 26 July 1864.
[272] *Talbot Leader*, *Argus* 6 June 1865.
[273] *Talbot Leader*.
[274] *Talbot Leader*. 21 September 1865.

> "A party of Aboriginals who have been for the last few days camping near the old lead at Homebush", remarks the *Maryborough Advertiser*, "met with a slice of good luck on Saturday last, in the shape of a four and a half ounce nugget picked up by one of them amongst a heap of tailings in one of the shallow gullies running into the Homebush lead. [Reported in *Argus* 1 July 1866][275]

> "On Saturday morning," says the *Maryborough Advertiser*, "a party of aborigines commenced a search for gold on the heaps of pipeclay at the White Hills, near Mr Mark Drewin's store, and in a very short time they discovered pieces which they sold for 12s., 15s.., and 10 pounds odd. The same party were successful some time since in the neighbourhood of Amherst and Talbot. They say, 'whitefellow dig for gold, and blackfellow pick it up.' Their eyes seem more serviceable than many men's picks and shovels."[276]

> Some Aborigines in the neighbourhood of Amherst found a nugget last week [26 August 1870] on top of the old workings. It realised between 5 pounds and 6 pounds [currency]. With this they clothed themselves comfortably, and some of the lubras adorned their swarthy necks with necklaces. They found another nugget the week before in some surface ground near Mia Mia.[277]

As noted earlier a greater number of goldfield correspondents merely noted an Indigenous presence in the vicinity of the gold diggings themselves without any direct attribution to their role as gold seekers. Typical examples of miners' references to their presence only would include William Gilbanks at the Creswick Creek diggings in December 1854, who quipped 'even in these remote regions where the native and kangaroo roam'[278] and CW Babbage's illustration of a 'Blackfellow at the tent, Currency Creek, December 1858' entreating gold diggers to "Give me sugar".[279] Newspaper reports too inferred a prominent presence on select goldfields. Buckley, an Aboriginal man (Djadjawurrung) 'and his followers' was reputed to be 'perhaps as familiar to the diggers on the Amhearst and Mia Mia Flat workings as any of the settled residents.'[280] On other fields an unidentified informant remembered hearing it said that several members of a tribe whose territory was along the Ovens River in the

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[275] Maryborough Advertiser, The *Argus* 1 July 1866.
[276] *Argus* 3 October 1866.
[277] *Argus* 26 August 1870. p.3
[278] W Gilbanks, Letters, NLA MS, Canberra.
[279] C Babbage, 'Give Me Sugar', NLA, Canberra.
[280] *Talbot Leader*, "Mysterious Murder at the Mia Mia," *Argus* 8 July 1862.

Oxley or Milawa District, visited the Stanley forest several times in the very early days of the gold rush.[281] Similarly, Selby 'saw several of the natives'[282] and miner James Morgan noted that in the early days [1850s] he was often visited by Aboriginals but their visits were of a friendly nature.[283] Mrs. Charles Clacy, on her visit to the gold diggings of Victoria in 1852-3, like many diggers attested to the eclectic nature of the gold seekers, and as if to emphasise her point, stating that 'All nations, classes and costumes are represented there' including 'Aborigines, with a solitary blanket flung over them.'[284] Michael O'Grady, a quarry labourer deposed in September 1859 that around the Stony Rises Hotel in the Ballarat District 'There were a great lot of native blacks about this place and district some six or eight weeks ago'.[285] At the Buninyong goldfields in 1856, William Rayment worked a claim with some 'Calcutta darkies'.[286]

On the Ovens District goldfields William Rayment recorded that 'We fell in with a goodly number of natives at different places on the Road but the most favourite resort of these people are the Public Houses'.[287] Swedish miner Carl Lagergren made various references to the proximity of a Djadjawurrung clan that had decamped next to him at Caledonian Reef and remained there for the entire winter season, stressing that 'They stay close to the gold diggings'.[288] Oliver Ragless, a miner at Mount Alexander also noted 'opposite our tent there are a good number of natives

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[281] D McKenzie, Looking Back (Beechworth: *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 1958). p.191
[282] J Selby, Diary.and Papers, SLV, Melbourne.
[283] D Rogers, A Kew Centenarian, Typescript of newspaper article with notes, Morgan, James, SLV.
[284] C Clacy, Mrs, A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia, in 1852-3: Written on the Spot (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853). p.23
[285] M O'Grady, Inquest Deposition Files, Public Records Office of Victoria, Melbourne.
[286] Rayment, Diary. It is likely that Rayment is using a racist epithet about Aboriginal people rather than describing Indians from Calcutta as no evidence has been found which corroborates Rayment's claim.
[287] Rayment, Diary. pp.44-5
[288] C Lagergren, Journal and Letters, NLA MS, Canberra.

[presumably Djadjawurrung] on the diggings'.[289] The half yearly return of Aboriginal people in the Western Port District for June-December 1852 noted that the two hundred plus Jajowrong [Djadjawurrung] and Malleegoondeet [Barababaraba] tribes 'have been chiefly congregated about the Loddon, Campaspe, and in the vicinity of the diggings at Mount Alexander.'[290] Edward Tame emphasised many times in his journal that he encountered Aboriginal people (Wathawurrung and Djadjawurrung), but also noting where he infrequently met with them too. As an example, he noted that in Ballan 'we often saw aborigines squatting about...I continually came across them.' And again in Creswick Creek penned: 'sometimes meeting a lot of natives, of whom there seemed to be a large number about Creswick Creek.' He was surprised to see 'a few but not many natives' on the way to the Ovens diggings, and more so when on one occasion he did not 'remember [seeing] a single native all the way going or coming [Melbourne-Ballarat], which was very remarkable.'[291] Others such as Morley Roberts emphasised Aboriginal presence in the gold towns, rather than in the bush or on the fields themselves.[292] Roberts wrote a short story about 'King Billy', a Wathawurrung man whose country incorporated Ballarat's goldfields but provides only reference to his urban associations.

> King Billy was given to strolling up and down the streets of Ballarat when that eviscerated city was merely in process of disembowelment, before alluvial mining gave way to quartz crushing...Old Billy was mostly to be found where there was chance of a drink.[293]

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[289] Ragless, ed., Oliver's Diary: An 'Andkerchief of Eirth. p.46,56
[290] Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address. p.27
[291] Tame, Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings.
[292] In miscellaneous papers referring to East Gippsland history there are no references to Aboriginal people on the goldfields, yet in 1863 it was recorded that the 'Blacks had a very extensive camp in Bairnsdale'. Cited in N Blackman, Miscellaneous Papers Re: East Gippsland History, RHSV Ms, Melbourne. p.22
[293] M Roberts, King Billy of Ballarat: And Other Short Stories (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1892). p.1

Teaming up

The celebrated cosmopolitan nature of the gold diggings has been well documented in the historiography of gold, but rarely is the active Indigenous input alluded to or unpackaged by historians or writers. Yet in the primary records the coming together of 'different races' including Aboriginal people in the search for gold was an often commented upon subject. William McLachlan, in his deposition to the Goldfields Reward Board, acknowledged that when digging for gold in May 1853 a 'blackfellow from Glenorchy' had seen him fossicking at Pleasant Creek [near Stawell] and had then returned with a non-Indigenous miner, 'Dublin Jack', who stated that he intended claiming the reward for finding the first gold.[294] Other miners too remarked on the mixed assemblages of mining parties such as JF Hughes who struck out for the gold diggings in 1853. He exclaimed

> Porcupine Flat had now rapidly developed into a gigantic rush of some 40,000 people. Among those busy gold-seekers might have been found representatives of nearly every phase of human society – from the Aboriginal, the ticket-of-leave man from the Derwent, the stockman from the Riverina to the enterprising merchant and the Oxford graduate.[295]

This pall mall of human society according to some such as William Nawton, a miner on the central Victorian goldfields in September 1852, was relatively free of discord: 'You have of course every grade of character amongst the diggers – from the most courteous gentleman to the commonest black – but all seem to harmonize with each

[294] Dublin Jack was reported to have 'lived with the blacks for six years and had two sons from the union.' See: CE Sayers, Shepherd's Gold (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1966).pp.2-4

[295] Hughes in Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. p.4

other.'[296] An anonymous writer at the Mt Alexander diggings in central Victoria echoed Nawton's observation.

> Where all have much the same aspect and association is necessary for work, while no guarantee of character can be obtained, groupings are formed, not of the most pleasant description to some of the parties. That of a gentleman, two convicts, a black native, and a Zomerzetzire boor, may be taken as a sample.[297]

Another eclectic party was formed on an unidentified field, and was formed of 'a motley group, consisting of decayed gentlemen, stout labourers, a sprinkling of seamen, Jew dealers, and some of the black natives, who lounged about, and assisted in erecting temporary huts, but never attempted to dig for gold, though they perfectly understood its value.'[298] Some examples of teaming up with non-Indigenous miners were more explicit. Charles Read, a miner on the Turon goldfields of NSW affirmed that parties of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous miners were a reality and at times long-standing ones: 'An acquaintance of mine at the Turon had two natives who had been with him for several years.'[299]

F McKenzie Clarke recalled that members of the Native Police Corps were prospectors at Golden Gully (Bendigo). McClelland, a drill instructor with the Corps, was stationed briefly on Bendigo Creek in 1851-52:

> Sergeant McL. paid us a visit with a party of black police on patrol and after camping, he took the black boys up the gully and they immediately began picking up gold on the surface in considerable quantities and by night, with the assistance of the dish and shovel we lent him, he and the black boys obtained over two pounds weight of gold and this he greatly augmented during the two succeeding days. Then, greatly disgusted at the necessity that obliged him to

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[296] WC Nawton, Diary, SLV MS, Melbourne.
[297] Religious Tract Society, Australia: Its Scenery, Natural History, Resources and Settlements with a Glance at Its Goldfields (London: Religious Tract Society, ca 1854). p.29
[298] The Religous Tract Society, Australia and Its Settlements (London: Religous Tract Society, 1853). p.7
[299] R Read, What L Heard, Saw and Did at the Australian Goldfields (London: Boone, 1853). p.253

> resume his duties he entered into negotiations with our party to purchase his claim.[300]

Naturally, there were many occasions when relations that involved the precious metal were anything but harmonious. An anonymous and undated letter written to Phillip Johnson recounts a tale of greed and suspicious circumstances on an unspecified goldfield (probably Oven Valley) of Victoria.

> You doubtless remember Black Jim a tall fellow that used to work with Thomson and Jim Lorman he was found dead since you left the blacks are strongly suspected of having murdered him as he was going to the blacks camp when last seen alive he had a good many small nuggets in his possession when last seen amounting in all to about 10oz. So one day the blacks brought in a nugget rather more than an ounce and sold to Mcilveen. So him and a lot of the diggers got the blacks to go out with them to show them where they got it. So the blacks took them up on to the dray road on the side of the mountain and said they got it there in the little ditch made with the dray wheels it was a wet day and there was a stream of water in it So the people all began to search it. I was coming up from the post office and just as I came to them one of the black fellows pulled his hand out of the water and a nugget in it about 8dwt there was such a rush there as you never saw about twenty or thirty of them all down on their knees shoving one another in the gutters...but no more was to be found. So Thompson saw one of the nuggets and immediately identified it as one the missing man had in his possession when he saw him last so this aroused suspicion and two of the blacks were taken into custody. The commissioner asked them where the man was, one of them said Jacky can tell you. So Jacky another black fellow was immediately seized and ordered to tell. So he took the commissioner right to the spot...the blacks all made their escape the next morning and has never been seen since.[301]

Richard Mackay in his 'Recollections of Early Gippsland Goldfields' published in 1916 was unable to confirm whether a site 10 miles from Sale had been the location of a massacre.

> There is a legend that the hill where that bark hut stood had been the scene of a fight with the blackfellows, then numerous, many of whom fell before the guns of their white brothers. I tried to get some definite information from some of the pioneers regarding it but could never obtain any information beyond that the

[300] Cusack, ed., Early Days on Bendigo.p.13
[301] Johnson, Papers.

> blacks were troublesome, and that there had been a fight. They appeared to avoid the subject.[302]

The rationale for having an Indigenous companion on a prospecting party was at times explicitly explained to new comers by some goldfield writers such as James Montagu Smith who believed Aboriginal people to be more adept at certain tasks than non-Indigenous people

> We again tried the hole minus two of our hands; and Dick amongst the number showed the white feather, leaving us with only nine good men and true. We repaired the race and set two aborigines at work to cut bark for us, they being so much more ready at it than Europeans.[303]

Short references in miners' diaries relating to the teaming up with or the invaluableness of encountering Indigenous people are not uncommon. Thomas Blyth is typical of this occurrence having kept a diary on the goldfields of Bendigo and Ballarat in 1852, he devoted two small fragments relating to his contact with Aboriginal people: 'Proceeded about 3 miles and camped near a gentleman with two blacks...Crossed the Campaspe taking the horses and cart through the R[iver] and paying a native with a canoe to cross our goods.'[304] Other miners were deeply indebted to the Aboriginal assistance proffered to them such as a desperate tale of near disaster retold by George Mackay whereby a miner's wife suffering great privations, on the brink of committing suicide and infanticide in the Loddon River is rescued by a Djadjawurrung youth.

> According to her own account, she felt impelled to drown herself and her children. Standing there, looking at her shivering, little ones through her scolding tears, and hesitating as to which of them she would throw into the river first, she was startled by a sharp, shrill cry. Turning round, she perceived a

[302] Mackay, Recollections of Early Gippsland Goldfields. p.21
[303] Cuffley, ed., Send the Boy to Sea: The Memoirs of a Sailor on the Goldfields by James Montagu Smith. p.72
[304] T Blyth, Diary, NLA MS, Canberra.

> young black boy bounding towards her...he quickly explained to her that he was with a dray, which was returning home from an out-station..."No, you cry, Mrs. Charley," said the boy affectionately. "You all right now – directly." "Bless his dear black face," she used to say afterwards in telling her pitiful tale. "It seemed to me like an angel come down from heaven".[305]

Some miners such as George Robins experienced both his life saved and his life threatened by Djadjawurrung people on the fields near Castlemaine.

> I sank a hole near Clinkers Hill...while baling water out of the claim I fell in and was pulled out by a blackfellow...I took the first bullock from Mount Korong to Dunolly, and the first Government safe to Mount Moliagul, and while at the last named place I lost my horse, so I employed a black tracker to hunt him up. The fellow asked 10/-, and insisted on pre-payment, but after getting the cash he refused to do the job. A lot of blacks surrounded my dray, and one got possession of my gun and threatened to shoot me if I did not give him some sugar, tea and flour. Of course I had to comply.[306]

A number of miners recalled being pestered by Aboriginal people on the goldfields such as Seweryn Korzelinski, a Polish miner, who recorded that a number of Djadjawurrung people 'often visited' his claim near Forest Creek in central Victoria 'asking for rice, sugar and tobacco.'[307] By way of contrast, George Rowe, also at Forest Creek and at Bendigo, experienced the Djadjawurrung's generosity in the shape of gifts and willingness to be models for his sketches of them on several occasions. Rowe wrote often of his encounters with the Djadjawurrung, actively seeking them out as he recognized paintings of them were a very saleable commodity.

> I have got some black fellows to draw which I can do by candlelight...A few days since Billy or King William the chief of the Bendigo tribe with one of his gins sat for me for their pictures. I made a sketch of them he had an opossum rug thrown over his shoulders she a blanket...Since I took a sketch of King Billy, I have had a visit from all the tribe every day – they bring me small quantities of gold which they pick up from the surface...they brought me a young kangaroo rat and have promised to get me a young possum...I heard there was some encamped so I walked over and made a sketch of them from which I have today painted a group for 2-2-0 they are a very harmless people...I

[305] G Mackay, History of Bendigo (Bendigo: Lerk and McClure, 2000). p.12
[306] Robins in Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. pp.176-7
[307] Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. p.90

> must try to get hold of some more of the natives and make portraits of them as I find they sell so well...I shut up shop and went over the hills to see an encampment of natives we found them in the forest about sixty to eighty...many of them speak English...This afternoon I walked across the hill into the bush with the intention of taking some sketches of the natives but I found them all gone but 4 old men and a woman with her daughter –of one of the men I took a sketch of them and I hope I shall be able to make money of it.[308]

Some writers noted the disadvantages of employing Indigenous people on the goldfields. One of the major setbacks perceived by non-Indigenous people in employing Aboriginal people, reported by employers in pastoral, maritime, service and mining sectors, was the kinship structure that had to be abided by the employer. In the earlier pastoral period many squatters and others quickly came to recognize that convivial workplace relations could be often enjoyed only if the families of their valued Aboriginal workers were provided for. J.N McLeod of the Westernport District of Victoria in his reply to the 1858 Select Committee into the condition of Aboriginal people in Victoria stated that he 'always employed them when he could but found them expensive work people, for if you employed one you had to feed ten.'[309] McLeod's complaint was often echoed by others. In the diary of Thomas Booth, a miner at Buninyong in central Victoria, Booth notes that it was 'their first law of nature that if you gave to one you have to give to all.'[310] John Chandler reminisced about his father's experiences with Woiwurrung people near Melbourne:

> Sometimes my father would promise them some tobacco, if they would cut some wood. They would send their lubras to cut the wood and then come themselves for the tobacco, and then as soon as they were gone the lubras would come for some, for they smoke as much as the men; so he had to pay double.[311]

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[308] Rowe, Correspondence.
[309] Quoted in Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria.p.46
[310] T Booth, Diary of Thomas Booth, Diary, Buninyong Historical Society Archives, Buninyong. p.5
[311] Cannon, ed., Forty Years in the Wilderness.

In recent times the role of non-Indigenous women on the goldfields has been the subject of scholarly research,[312] which is revealing a more complex picture of goldfields society than previously considered. It has long been established that a hallmark feature of the goldfields was its democratizing or class leveling effect. Increasingly historians are revealing women's presence and role on the goldfields,[313] yet thus far have largely failed to explore Aboriginal women's role on the goldfields, which is perplexing given that in the historical records a number of non-Indigenous male miners are known to have teamed up with female Aboriginals and formed what appears to have been mining parties.

Mixed Ethnicity Sexual Unions

Relationships between non-Indigenous miners and Aboriginal women were frequent according to the Local Guardian of Aboriginal people in the Ballarat district, Andrew Porteous.[314] Some of these relationships were long-standing ones such as a Djabwurrung woman from Mt Cole called Lady Sutherland, who lived with a miner named Sutherland for forty-five years.[315] Dublin Jack, a shepherd and miner on Pleasant Creek in 1853 was reputed to have 'lived six years with the blacks and has two fine sons'.[316] He also had the reputation for being one of the first miners at Pleasant Creek after being advised of the good prospects by an unidentified 'blackfellow from Glenorchy [local pastoral station].'[317] William Thomas, the

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[312] Post doctoral researcher Dr Claire Wright is currently conducting research on: 'Eureka's Women: An Intimate History of Sex, Class and Culture on the Victorian Goldfields'.
[313] Historian Dot Wickham is currently researching 'Women on the Goldfields of Ballarat'.
[314] 'Mr Porteous wishes Davy [Wathawurrung clansman] to return and get two lubras living with two whitefellows in tents, gold diggers on Fiery Creek...' W Thomas, 25 January, 1867 in W Thomas, Journal, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
[315] L Keays, "Aborigines in the Beaufort District," ed. Fred Cahir (Beaufort: 1994), vol.
[316] Bride, ed., Letters from Victorian Pioneers. p.146
[317] Sayers, Shepherd's Gold. p.2

Guardian of Aborigines reported in 1852 the on-going success (and strains) of an intercultural marriage between a non-Indigenous miner and an Aboriginal woman.

> The white man who many months back was desirous of being married to an Aborigine has kept true to her and she to him, though on account of his occupation, he cannot be continually with her; when he can he returns and brings her clothes and what she requires. She has been in my district from the time she left my roof at Pentridge, and is a kind, faithful, and affectionate servant.[318]

John Morrow relates the story of Annie Griggle, an Aboriginal woman, who came onto the Mitta Mitta diggings, stayed and lived with a non-Indigenous miner (Jack Forrester) and became 'a respected figure in the valley'. Some of these relationships between Aboriginal women and non-Indigenous gold miners produced children. One important example is the case of the Connolly family, a prominent Victorian Aboriginal family who is descended from John Connolly. Connolly was born between the years 1855 and 1860 at the Pleasant Creek diggings where his Aboriginal mother (Djabwurrung) lived with a gold digger, and was raised by his maternal great uncle.[319] Frank Shellard recalled in his 'Reminiscences of an Old Gold Digger' numerous incidences of inter-racial unions such as one between a non-Indigenous miner called Jack Wells and an Aboriginal woman named Kitty. This relationship resulted in two children and a greater reliance by Wells on employing Aboriginal people.

> His [Jack Wells] men were nearly all half casts and splendid riders he was living in a creek near a blacks camp, he had a very pretty half cast woman named Kitty living with him as his housekeeper. She had two children by him, a boy and girl, the children were very good looking fine strong children and the father was very fond of them...[320]

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[318] William Thomas in Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address.
[319] For further discussion see: Clark and Cahir, "Aboriginal People, Gold and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria."
[320] Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.

The topic of inter-racial relationships has been poorly researched, but it is known that miners in Victoria and elsewhere sought and maintained long-lasting relationships with Aboriginal women. Naturally, there were instances where the sexual relationship was a violent one or as had occurred frequently in the pastoral period, where the 'prostitution' of Aboriginal women to non-Indigenous men was abused and led to severe violence.[321] Official Government correspondence about inter-racial marriages or de facto relationships is not prominent in the 1850s as this was a period of relative indifference towards Aboriginal affairs and in the correspondence of miners the topic is often cryptic and not conclusive. A case in point is a brief reference in the papers of Phillip Johnson, a miner at the Ovens Valley in Victoria and New South Wales which is possibly evidence of a relationship between an Aboriginal miner and a non-Indigenous woman: 'Old Mrs. Barker is dead and poor Black Bill he was found dead in the Bush supposed to have lost his way when he was drunk...they bought his claim on the crown of the Reef which he and Long Harry bought of.'[322] The incidence of non-Indigenous women becoming the sexual partners of Aboriginal men in the gold mining rushes is very difficult to corroborate. Frank Shellard, a miner in the Omeo district described in an unusual tale titled 'The White Mary' of how a young white girl, living comfortably with an unidentified tribe near Gibbo Mountain (c.1860s) at her father's bequest, until she sought refuge from the amorous affections of two Aboriginal men, with a pair of non-Indigenous miners, one of whom was named Cooper.[323] Historical geographer Sue Wesson uncovered an interesting reference to a

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[321] The case of 'Buckley' an Aboriginal man murdered on the Mt Alexander goldfields after making petitions to two white miners for two 'lubras' to return from the miners' tents is in all likelihood an example of non-Indigenous miners abusing the prostitution of, or gift giving, of Aboriginal women that occurred frequently in the pastoral period. For further discussion see: Critchett, A Distant Field of Murder; Western District Frontiers 1834-1888.; Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria, Christie, Aboriginals in Colonial Victoria.

[322] Johnson, Papers.

[323] Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.

'European girl who ran away from her father at Boorowa to live with an upper Murray Aboriginal man named Dick Cooper.' Wesson indicates that Dick Cooper was associated with the country around the Tubbut region. Further research is needed in this topic, but is outside the scope of this thesis.[324]

Inter-racial relationships between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people had obvious spin-offs for both parties. For the indigenous partners the benefits of such a relationship were the likelihood of remaining in one's own country, and for the white miner it guaranteed expert local knowledge and freely-available bush produce. An example of this is Annie Griggle who 'would spend a lot of time fishing from a canoe on the river' providing much sought after variety in diet. Mossman and Bannister, two miners who wrote about their experiences on the Victorian goldfields in 1853, discussed the constraints and advantages of one such inter-racial union:

> Old Bill Cowper would dig away at the side of a mountain and chance it. Very few of the diggers would chance it as Bill did; he never seemed to move from the place where he first commenced. Perhaps it was very inconvenient for him to shift, as he had an Aboriginal woman living with him, which might be a potent reason for his always remaining at one place. Bill had evidently great faith in the mountain... he continued to always dig, digging in the side of the mountain, and washing with the assistance of the Aboriginal woman. A lad who assisted him on one occasion said that he got six hundred pounds worth and that it would keep him and his gin a long time. Bill had been about twelve years beside his hole in the mountain, when I saw him last, and he is likely to die there.[325]

Reynolds concluded in his brief discussion about the companionship of Aboriginal women with northern Australian non-Indigenous miners that it 'greatly eased the hardship of life on small and isolated mineral fields where often only a handful of

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[324] S Wesson, "The Aborigines of Eastern Victoria and Far South-Eastern New South Wales, 1830-1910: An Historical Geography," PhD, Monash University, 2002. p.234

[325] F Lancelott, Australia as It Is: It's Settlements, Farms and Goldfields (Tokyo: Charles Tuttle, 1967). pp.86-88

Europeans attempted to make a go of dubious claims.'[326] It is a difficult area of research as the taboo nature of such relationships in nineteenth century Victoria and the often associated implications of prostitution inherent in many inter-cultural relationships throw a weighty veil of silence around the topic. Some writers such as John Lang allude to the topic of inter-racial sexual relations in a very oblique manner, stating that the 'females are called "gins" and at times are tent keepers to the out-stationed solitary white.'[327] Other writers did not mince words. Seweryn Korzelinski wrote of the ease and affordability of procuring sexual services from Aboriginal women, noting 'a stick of tobacco is sufficient to gain friendship amongst men and favours from women. It is cheap, but then the ladies do not wear lace petticoats.'[328] Korzelinski also related a lengthy dialogue of how when walking through the bush one day he had met an Aboriginal couple. An unidentified Aboriginal man offered

> "I'll stay here and you take my lubra for a walk." Pleasant walk, I thought and said "I don't want to." He looked at me skeptically. There was an interval during which we all walked in silence. Apparently some new conception was forming in his mind. Finally he said: "You know what, give me another shilling and I'll bring you gin."
>
> "I don't drink."
>
> "What sort of a man are you? Drink is good."
>
> "Just as good as a walk with your lubra", I said laughing, and turning off the road, went off to my nearby claim, never to see the couple nor my shilling again.[329]

[326] Reynolds, With the White People: The Crucial Role of Aborigines in the Exploration and Development of Australia. p.225
[327] J Lang, The Australian Emigrants Manual (London: Partridge, 1852). p.106
[328] Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. p.9
[329] Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. pp.10-11

George Wathen in his journey through the goldfields of Victoria in 1854 commented on the immorality of the Aboriginal women, ironically overlooking the immorality of the non-Indigenous men.

> At Challicum. There is now an encampment of the "mi mis" of the Aborigines at this station...The men are absent, but have left their *loubras* (women) to demoralize the whitemen employed on the station, who feed them well, and receive their recompense. The natives will sell their wives for a night for a piece of tobacco.[330]

The prostitution of Aboriginal women that Wathen wrote of was frequently made reference to[331] but rarely described at close quarters making it a difficult subject to comment with any confidence on the impoverishment or empowerment of Aboriginal women. That it occurred is undeniable but the dynamics of consent and sexual politics is also beyond the scope of this study.

IMMIGRANT ABORIGINAL GOLD SEEKERS IN AMERICA & VICTORIA AND GOLD MINING IN OTHER STATES BY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

There are a notable number of examples of Aboriginal people succumbing to the gold fever of the goldfields of California, and of immigrant Aboriginal people joining the rush to Victoria. Jacky Small, Davy, and three other unidentified Aboriginal men from the Durundur language area in New South Wales joined Thomas Archer, a white miner, in July 1849 to look for gold in California. They shared many adventures together, including being shipwrecked, encountering grizzly bears, and learning

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[330] G Wathen, The Golden Colony, or Victoria in 1854: With Remarks on the Geology of the Australian Gold Fields (London: Longman, 1855). p.122

[331] Miner Charles Eberle noted that he was offered Aboriginal 'women and dogs' in exchange for some tobacco. See: Eberlie, Diary. Correspondents to the CBA frequently reported on its occurrence. See: Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament (Melbourne: 1861).

'Californian manners'.[332] The passenger list on another vessel heading to San Francisco in 1850 included 'two Aboriginals of New South Wales'.[333] These two travelers are probably the two Boonwurrung people GA Robinson, the Chief Protector of Aborigines (1839-1850) provided the names of: 'Port Phillip Aborigines who went with L. Smith to California: Yarerenhope: Johnny; Porongmulong: Tommy'.[334] Georgiana McCrae also described in her journal 'Johnnie', a nineteen-year-old Boonwurrung man, who had 'accompanied George Smith on a journey to California, and, on their return to Australia, he threw off the clothes of civilization and took to the bush, but the changed existence proved fatal and he succumbed to phthisis'.[335] William Thomas, the Assistant protector of Aborigines in the Western Port district of Victoria in his journal of August 1849 corroborates and adds to our knowledge of these inter-continental Aboriginal gold seekers: 'Two Aborigines (Poky's son Tommy and his brother) had gone with Mr. Smith of Porneo to California'.[336] These identified parties represent a forgotten people in goldrush immigration annals, deserving of further research but are outside the scope of this study.

The Victorian gold rushes were also responsible for attracting a Tasmanian Aboriginal family to leave Tasmania and settle in the Buangor district in 1853 at Eurambeen station. John Briggs, his wives Louisa Strugnell Briggs and Ann Briggs, and their family joined the rush to the goldfields, where they lived independently from any government assistance until the early 1870s. In November 1857, John was earning £58 and four rations, pitching hay and carting split timber from the mountains. In 1858, his wages rose to £70 and three rations. Briggs, not unlike many

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[332] Monaghan, Australians and the Gold Rush. p.88
[333] Monaghan, Australians and the Gold Rush. p.116
[334] Clark, ed., The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate: 10 June 1849 - 30 September 1852. p.34
[335] H McCrae, ed., Georgiana's Journal (Pymble: Angus & Robertson, 1992). p.214
[336] Thomas, Journal.

non-Indigenous workers of the time, went off to the diggings in March but returned to build a new hut on the station, and other bush work such as cutting bark at sixpence a sheet.[337]

There are a number of references to other immigrant Indigenous people migrating to Victoria during the gold rush period. The majority of immigrant Indigenes were stockmen from other states[338] who were droving cattle, but there a few notable examples of immigrant Indigenous miners in the historical records. JC Thomson, Crown Commissioner of Lands, alluded to the fact that immigrant Indigenous miners were present on the goldfields of Victoria when he wrote (rather erroneously) that: 'With the exception of one or two brought from distant parts of the country by parties of white men, none have been known to attempt the labour of the goldfields.'[339] Several brief references to immigrant Aboriginal people occur in the historical records, locating them at the goldfields or in close proximity. In 1873, George Brown, an Aboriginal man from Sydney, was arrested near the gold mining town of Steiglitz for deserting his illegitimate child.[340] William Thomas also recorded meeting two gold seekers, one Aboriginal (Thomas Walker) and one non-Indigenous, the Aboriginal man having traveled from the Sydney District with a consignment of horses for Geelong.[341] Thomas Thompson, one of sixteen Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement (Tasmanian Aboriginal) people who joined GA Robinson in Port Phillip was considered to possibly 'have been on the diggings'.[342] Andy Pittern, an

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[337] For further discussion see: Clark and Cahir, "Aboriginal People, Gold and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria."

[338] Typical of this arrangement was William Lyall, a pastoralist at Western Port who had as his retainer and coachman a Queensland Aboriginal named Guy. See: N Gunson, The Good Country: Cranborne Shire (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1968). p.83

[339] J Thomson, Correspondence, PROV, Melbourne.

[340] R Sumner, Steiglitz (Melbourne: National Parks, 1982). p.6

[341] Cited in Broome, Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800. p.108

[342] I Clark, ed., The Papers of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector's Office Journal 1839-1850 (Clarendon: Heritage Matters, 2000). p.219

Aboriginal man from Adelaide was known to have lived in Victoria throughout the 1860s but it is not recorded whether he visited the goldfields.[343]

In the historic record, there are numerous instances of Aboriginal people discovering and/or prospecting for gold. The discovery of gold by three Aboriginal youths near Wellington, in New South Wales, is an outstanding example of how Aboriginal people have been sidelined in the history of gold discovery. One account related the fabulous find thus:

> A few days ago an educated Aboriginal returned home to his employer with the intelligence that he had discovered a large mass of gold amongst a heap of quartz upon the run whilst attending his sheep. Gold being the universal topic of conversation, the curiosity of this sable son of the forest was excited and provided with a tomahawk he had amused himself by exploring the country and had thus made the discovery. Three blocks of quartz containing the hundred weight of gold were released from the bed... Interestingly the three youths did not forget their kinship obligations to share the large reward given to them 'but sought them out and urgently pressed them to go and share in their good fortune'.[344]

The first discovery of payable gold in Australia has usually been attributed to Edward Hargraves, but there have been consistent reports that others preceded him yet did not receive the recognition. John Calvert, aided by unidentified Aboriginal guides, claimed that with the consistent assistance of his Aboriginal companions he had found gold in New South Wales several years before Hargraves:

> [He got] good results by 'simple crushing and rough washing – with the assistance of his native labourers – Naturally the finder did his best to keep his discovery secret and was for years successful in doing so, having no white allies and treating his black fellows so well as to secure their silence about his

[343] Andy Pittern appeared before the Melbourne City Court on a frequent basis and is known to have served some time in imprisonment. "Drunkenness and Disorderly Conduct," *Argus* 5 May 1863. p.6
[344] Keesing, ed., History of the Australian Gold Rushes. pp. 39-44

searches for the 'medicine earth'... All had gone well so long as he had contented himself with falling back on black labour.[345]

Geoffrey Blainey's history of Australian mining, *The Rush That Never Ended*, is studded with references to Aboriginal people in a number of significant capacities, across the breadth of the continent and in all the critical periods of mining (especially in relation to gold). The pivotal roles that Blainey attributes to Aboriginal people included discovering, prospecting and guiding others to some of the most prominent mineral fields in Australia, including the Murchison, the Kimberley, Bathurst, Mount Magnet, White Feather and Tenant Creek.[346] Historian Robyn Bancroft discusses the role of Aboriginal miners on the Solferino and Lionsville goldfields of northern New South Wales, and has demonstrated how Aboriginal people discovered new gold deposits. She notes, for example, that in 'the early 1870s the Sir Walter Scott mine was discovered by a blackfellow... Old Jack Torrance who was an Aboriginal police tracker who had a keen eye for "outcrops" which materially assisted the prospecting operations of Messrs Smith'.[347]

OTHER IMMIGRANT INDIGENOUS MINERS IN VICTORIA

Whilst the focus of this thesis is on Aboriginal people indigenous to Australia and their role on the Victorian goldfields it is interesting to note a significant number of other Indigenous groups[348] were also attracted by the gold rush, in particular New Zealand Maoris. For a number of miners there was a propensity to compare Victorian Indigenous people with Indigenes from other parts of Australia and the world,

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[345] Coningsby, The Discovery of Gold. p.12
[346] See: Blainey, The Rush That Never Ended.
[347] Bancroft, "Aboriginal Miners and the Solferino and Lionsville Goldfields of Northern New South Wales."
[348] Miner, JJ Bond and others noted the presence of Lascars in Melbourne, but rarely on the goldfields themselves. This topic is outside the scope of this study. J Bond, Memoirs, NLA MS, Canberra. p.42

especially the New Zealander Maori. Edwin Middleton's description of Australia is a vivid example of this comparative approach: 'They [Australian Aboriginal people] certainly do not possess the intelligence of the Moirie [Maori] of New Zealand, who with proper treatment might be brought to a high state of civilization.'[349] There is strong evidence that the majority of Maori miners on the Victorian goldfields were predominately from whaling vessel crews who like the majority of vessel crews in this period sought better returns from their labor on the goldfields than from returning to their ships. Illustrations of Maoris in goldfield artwork support the notion that Maoris were a highly visible presence. WE Adcock's observations confirm that their assembly on the goldfields of central Victoria did not go un-noticed.

> One of the sights at Eaglehawk in its secondary stage was the operations of Throckmorton, a New Zealander, who had more than 15 Maoris working for him, most of whom had been sailors upon whaling vessels. He found rich washdirt on the Bendigo side of Eaglehawk Gully, and shrewdly calculated that it was a waste of time and money to wash it up as it was raised, cradling being a slow process. He therefore started his men stacking it, and they raised several great mounds of washdirt...and realized a considerable fortune in a few weeks.[350]

Maori miners are occasionally noted to have been independent miners as well. Local historian AM Pearson, in his history of Omeo, recounted that 'Herotia Manning, a Maori, discovered the Polar Star [reef] a short distance away, and this again was rich.'[351] Miners such as Robert Thomas, a miner near Malmsbury in central Victoria, reported the great wealth a party of Maoris had gained.

> ...half way up [the gully] was what was called the Blackman's hole being a claim occupied by new Zealanders whose faces were tattooed; this claim was

[349] Middleton, A Description of the Life and Times in Victoria in the 1860's by a Young Colonist. p. 56
[350] Adcock, The Gold Rushes of the Fifties. p.88
[351] A Pearson, Echoes from the Mountains (Omeo: Omeo Shire, 1969). p.80

> considered the richest in the whole gully and they were supposed to have made out of it a thousand or fifteen hundred pounds each...[352]

Ned Peters, a miner on the Dunolly fields in 1856, also averred the Maori presence on a couple of occasions: 'Walter has a young New Zealand chief, he is quite an intelligent person, a native of Poverty Bay...Harry the Maurie [Maori] and his mates have just got a nugget 13 lbs weight this morning.'[353] George Dunderdale, a miner on the Bendigo and adjoining fields also noted their exotic looks and preponderance in some gullies.

> Once I went to a rush of Maoris, near Job's Gully, and Scott came along with his portfolio, a small pick, pan and shovel. He did not dig any, but got the ugliest Maori he could find to sit on a pile of dirt while he took his portrait and sketched the tattoos. That spoiled the rush; every man, black and white, crowded around Scott while he was at work with his pencil, and then every single savage shook hands with him, and made signs to have his tattoos taken, they were so proud of their ugliness. They were all naked to the waist.[354]

In the early 1850s, JG Smith, a gold miner at Ballarat, noted that a man and 'a Maori woman came to Slatey Creek' and settled into gold mining and the community. Meta's friendliness, her traditional singing and her distinctive tattoos made her popular and 'esteemed' within the mining community.[355]

The Maori presence was significant on some goldfields, with Bendigo being the locale for some hundreds. Unfortunately the Djadjawurrung's response to these '*mainmait*' (foreigners) has not survived in the historical records but the numerous references to them by non-Indigenous miners attest to their very noticeable presence.

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[352] Thomas, Autobiography.
[353] Blake, ed., A Gold Digger's Diaries by Ned Peters. pp.119-132
[354] Dunderdale, The Book of the Bush. p.100
[355] J Smith, Reminiscences of the Ballarat Goldfield (Ballarat: Pick Point, 2002). p.113-5

George Mackay related their very conspicuous presence at the Red Ribbon agitation (a precursor to the Eureka rebellion).

> At that time there were numbers of native New Zealanders at work in Bendigo, and when the agitation was at its height some hundred and fifty of these armed themselves with pistols, guns, etc., and marching to the residence of the police magistrate, volunteered to place themselves under his orders in maintaining the peace of the district. They camped outside of his residence for a night and a day, but their services fortunately were not required for the preservation of order...[356]

Mackay's account is corroborated to a very large degree by Hubert De Castella's rendering of the event (and Panton, the Police magistrate[357]), with only some difference in the number of Maoris said to be present (60 in number, according to Panton) and the influence their show of solidarity to the Government had possibly imbued on the miner's rebellion.

> The 300 Maoris who were at Bendigo were camped together and busy like other miners looking for gold. Mr. Panton never went past without saying a few kind words to their chief. When he received news of the Ballarat insurrection he called him in to make him promise to keep the New Zealanders calm if any disorder broke out. An hour later the chief arrived in front of the government camp with all the men of his tribe. There he lined them up in battle order and gave a speech, after which they uttered frenzied shouts to proclaim their attachment to the government and all joined in one of their fierce war songs...Who knows if the demonstration of these island chiefs did not help discourage the few *Red republicans* at Bendigo, who were detested by the peace-loving miners?[358]

Whilst it has not been possible to locate any sources providing Victorian Aboriginal responses to Maoris, references to Aboriginal perceptions of Chinese people on the goldfields of Victoria, whilst not numerous, are extant. It is unfortunate that little has

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[356] Mackay, Annals of Bendigo, 1851 to 1867. p.16
[357] See: JA Panton, The Autobiography of J.A Panton, Autobiography, SLV Manuscripts, Melbourne.
[358] Hd Castella, Australian Squatters, trans. CB Thornton-Smith (Melbourne: MUP, 1987). pp.139-140

been written on this theme. A dedicated issue of *Aboriginal History* on the theme of 'Aboriginal –Asian contact' was published in 1981, with one article on nineteenth century Victorian Aboriginal visual perceptions of Chinese, but very little else. It has also not been possible to locate any archival records describing Chinese perceptions of Aboriginal people. One fragmentary account of Chinese people by two Queenslander Aboriginal drovers in Victoria is contained within the reminiscences of James Sinclair who wrote that upon the subject of Chinamen being broached one of them:

> gave us an exhibition of his wonderful powers of mimicry, by at once started yabbering away like a Chinaman. So perfect was his imitation of their language that if any person was approaching our camp at the time they would have imagined there was one of the "yellow agony" in our midst. When he finished he laughed heartily and from what he and his father said about the 'longtails' as they termed them, it was evident that they held 'John' in thorough contempt.[359]

There is also some evidence which may explain why coastal Aboriginal people in the Melbourne-Mordialloc area may have considered Chinese people in a very derogatory manner. With the influx of Chinese gold diggers to the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s the demand for salted fish grew, in particular schnapper; this fish salted well, could be fished successfully at Mordialloc and was salted in situ. Over a decade earlier (approximately 1841) a reserve for Aboriginals of approximately two square miles had been proposed and in the early 1850s, whilst not surveyed, had been maintained for the benefit of the 'coast tribes' under an arrangement between Thomas and Governor La Trobe.[360] The encroachment of Chinese and Anglo fishermen (over 100 people were employed in the salting industry) on the Aboriginal reserve at

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[359] J Sinclair, Memoirs, NLA MS, Canberra.

[360] P Felton, A History of Aboriginal Lands and Reserves, AIATSIS MS, Canberra. p.5 Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.26

Mordialloc which had traditionally been used for eel harvesting may have hardened Aboriginal attitudes towards a race that clearly were ostracized by the dominant non-Indigenous culture.[361] In 1858, with 'apparently little use being made of the reserve, the locals, including the Chinese, approached the Board of Land and Works to sell the reserve as a township site, so that the fishermen could build homes'. Thomas maintained that the 'area was frequently visited' and that he had preached to between fifty and sixty Aboriginals on the reserve in October, 1857. Thomas considered that the Aboriginal people would soon be extinct but implored that 'til then I trust not a perch will be wrested from them.' In July 1863 however the reserve was wrested from the Aboriginal people and declared a public commonage.[362]

A cartoon which appeared in the *Melbourne Punch* (11 February, 1875) titled 'Outraged Majesty' intimates the scorn which Aboriginal people may have held for Chinese people or may simply reflect the racist opinions endemic to large sections of Victoria's non-Indigenous community.

> New Chum: "Hi John, is this the right way to Toowambie?"
>
> King William: "Who you call 'um John, take me for dam Chinaman? Go to the debbil."
>
> Cartoon shows an Aboriginal in a stove pipe hat with nose in the air walking along track and new chum with swag stopping to ask directions.[363]

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[361] There is no direct evidence that Aboriginal (Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung) people were at odds with Chinese people specifically. In fact Thomas noted in November 1862 that Derrimut, a Boonwurrung clansman, had angrily asked why Thomas had allowed 'white man take away Mordialloc where blackfellows always sit down'. William Thomas cited in I Clark, "'You Have All This Place, No Good Have Children...' Derrimut: Traitor, Saviour, or a Man of His People' Royal Australian Historical Society, volume 91, part 2, (2005) pp.107-132.

[362] G Hibbins, A History of the City of Springvale Constellation of Communities (Port Melbourne: Lothian, 1984). p.47

[363] S Fabian, ed., Mr Punch Down Under (Melbourne: Fabian Green House, 1982). p.103

A painting by Tommy McCrae, a Waywurru man from northeastern Victoria depicting Chinese miners' people being chased by Aboriginal warriors was interpreted by historian Michael Christie as depicting an actual historical event.[364] Cooper and Urry dissented from this position claiming that 'details of Aboriginal/Chinese relations in northeastern Victoria are totally lacking, but it is unlikely that they were hostile'.[365] Cooper and Urry also posit that it is extremely unlikely Aboriginal people were in a position to mount such an attack as depicted McCrae's drawing and that it is more likely the violence towards Chinese miners is a reference to violent interactions between Queensland Aboriginal people to Chinese miners on northern Queensland goldfields. There is some evidence that Victorian Aboriginal people saw all Chinese people as 'mainmait' or undesirable foreigners[366] and therefore McCrae may have painted a scene which took place in an earlier period (1840s) but depicted the attire of Chinese miners in the 1860s. Chinese workers were certainly present in Victoria prior to the gold period, and thus Aboriginal people were certainly in some districts at least aware of their presence. In some areas Chinese-Aboriginal work interactions would have been very common, such as at 'Bushy Park' on the Avon River in Gippsland, where in 1854 there was a Chinese cook in the midst of 'a suburban environment of blackfellows' camps'.[367]

Fleeting comments, often unreferenced by contemporary historians provide only a myopic glimpse of what might be uncovered by future researchers. One historian writing of the Chinese experience on the Victorian goldfields noted that the Chinese and the Aboriginal miners and sojourners were both discriminated against and that the

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[364] Christie, Aboriginals in Colonial Victoria.
[365] Urry and Cooper, "Art, Aborigines and Chinese: A Nineteenth Century Drawing by the Kwat Kwat Artist Tommy Mcrae." p.86
[366] See: RA Polehampton, Kangaroo Land (London: Richard Bentley, 1862).
[367] J Leslie and H Cowie, eds., The Wind Still Blows: Early Gippsland Diaries (n.a: Leslie and Cowie, 1973). p.23

'Coaches would only allow them to ride on top with luggage and aborigines.'[368] There is also an (as yet) solitary allusion reported in the *Argus* (21 July, 1864) to the possible monetary trade in emu eggs between Aboriginal people and Chinese people in Victoria.[369] The reverend Athur Polehampton, who spent much time in the Western district of Victoria in the 1850s, considered that 'The blacks are said to have a strong prejudice against the Chinese, whom they accuse of being neither black nor white'[370] and a *Ballarat Star* correspondent reported in 1862 on an 'exchange of insults' between an Aboriginal and a Chinese man in Avoca.[371] A curious report in the *Argus* (11 July, 1864) highlights the need for more scholarly research into the field of Sino-Aboriginal relations on the Victorian goldfields: 'Chin yen, a Chinaman, sued "John McIntosh," an aboriginal native, in the Castlemaine Police Court, on Thursday, to recover for work and labour in building a house for said native; whose defence was, that he agreed to pay plaintiff the money when the house was finished, and it was not yet finished.'[372] There is ample evidence too that relations between Chinese miners and Aboriginal people had formed as a result of the attraction to smoking opium by Aboriginal people. The Reverend J Bulmer, under examination by the 1877 Victorian Royal Commission into the welfare of the State's Aboriginal peoples, elaborated on the endemic abuse of opium by Aboriginal people and confirmed they had acquired the habit at the Kiandra diggings, adding that 'they tell me that they buy it from the Chinamen'.[373] The selling of opium by Chinese miners to Aboriginal people also

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[368] J Dunstan, "The Chinese Experience," Investigator 11.Dec (1976). p.114

[369] Previously in this thesis, reference was made to an *Argus* correspondent concerned with Aboriginal people taking large numbers of emus' eggs not for food but to sell. The writer added: 'In connexion with this subject we may remark that the Chinese on the goldfields are great egg fanciers; but for culinary purposes, sheep's brains stewed with eggs is said to be a dainty dish in the celestial *cuisine* of digger-land.'

[370] Polehampton, Kangaroo Land. p.249

[371] *Ballarat Star* 22 January 1862. p.3

[372] *Argus* 25 October 1864.

[373] Victorian Royal Commission, Royal Commission on the Aborigines (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1877). p.48. Also see Bulmer's report to the BPA (1877) Board for the Protection of

occurred, according to historian Sue Wesson, in gold mining camps at Yackandandah, Beechworth, Delegate, Craigie, Major's Creek and Nerrigundah.[374]

This chapter has sought to consider the nature of Aboriginal participation in mining on the goldfields of Victoria. It is evident that some clans in particular regions independently participated avidly in the search for gold whilst the historical records are pregnant in their silence about other clans in other regions. The Djadjawurrung people in central Victoria had had a long and sustained association with Edward Parker, the Aboriginal Protector, and the station at Franklinford (and subsequently were able to live traditional lifestyles and still have the Franklinford reserve as a backstop).[375] This tribe was located in the centre of some of the most spectacular alluvial goldfields and was positioned better than other language groups to engage in mining for gold.

Hence, the greater reportage of Djadjawurrung people seeking gold is to be expected. The allure of gold, it has been demonstrated, was not exclusive to a Caucasian and masculine workforce. It has also been established that Aboriginal miners in Victoria were expending effort in a manner that at times closely aligned with Western concepts of time, work discipline, and industrial capitalism. Aboriginal peoples' importance on the goldfields has been shown to have been very significant on singular occasions in areas such as discovering new fields and collaborating with non-Indigenous miners.

Aborigines, Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament (Melbourne: BPA, 1871-1895).which confirmed that 'they have acquired that dangerous habit of opium smoking from the Chinese in their district' and added in 1889 that they 'were much addicted to opium smoking and other vices'. Howitt independently confirmed Bulmer's observations when he recorded that a number of Monaro Aborigines had been living on the Kiandra goldfields and around Currawang, from about 1875 to 1881, associating with non-Indigenous gold prospectors. A Howitt, Papers, SLV Ms, Melbourne.

[374] See Wesson, "The Aborigines of Eastern Victoria and Far South-Eastern New South Wales, 1830-1910: An Historical Geography."

[375] For a detailed discussion about the Aboriginal Station at Franklinford see: I Clark, D Cahir, Tanderrum, (Castlemaine: FOMAD, 2004).

The 'traditional' Aboriginal view of work, involving maintaining an intense religious relationship with the land and kinship affinities, has been demonstrated to not have been so at odds with the monetary work of alluvial gold mining. Arguably, some groups of Aboriginal miners forged a niche in the dominant economy which did not compromise their ideas of work.

In recent times scholars such as Richard Broome have examined the question 'Why did Aboriginal people enter the pastoral economy?' The reasons posited by Broome are equally satisfactory for why Aboriginal people entered the gold economy. It can be observed that the principal motivating factors were the depletion of traditional food sources (a topic discussed in a later chapter) leading to an ever increasing reliance on forging kinship relationships with non-Indigenes and the acquirement of exotic goods were the.[376] One integral element that is often overlooked when examining Aboriginal work patterns in the Victorian pastoral, or indeed the gold industry, is their voluble desire to remain on one's own country.

The relationships that were forged between some non-Indigenous miners and Aboriginal people on the goldfields of Victoria were considered meaningful and educative by a number of non-Indigenous miners. Aboriginal workers on the goldfields of Victoria were deemed a very desirable adjunct to the non-Indigenous miners who utilised them, but they were generally not an essential condition of success. There was however an appreciable degree of vital trade and labour transactions, especially in the guise of guiding that occurred on the goldfields between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people – an issue taken up in the following chapter.

[376] See: Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers."

CHAPTER FOUR: GUIDING ON AND TO THE GOLDFIELDS

For the most part, non-Indigenous miners' accounts of directly employing Aboriginal people revolve around the profession of guiding. A guide's role in both the pastoral and gold periods encompassed determining the most direct and easily traversable route (often along traditional pathways) and locating food, medicine and water in order to sustain their non-Indigenous companions. The guides also assisted in fording rivers safely, preparing temporary shelters, acting as diplomats and interpreters, negotiating passage through the country of resident clans met on the line of march and locating waterholes for horses and other stock. This chapter shall demonstrate that there are many instances of Aboriginal people initiating and keenly brokering their work relationships. Many sought to find their niche within the imposed Western economy in the vital role of guide, or what would be termed in today's parlance, 'expert Indigenous consultant', and hired by non-Indigenous miners traveling to the goldfields.

The considerable number of non-Indigenous miners and travelers who recorded their greatly beneficial encounters with Aboriginal guides speaks highly of their standing in this role, in the minds of the people being conveyed across unknown country. It is surprising that given the widespread praise bestowed upon Aboriginal guides throughout the exploratory, pastoral and gold period as outlined in this chapter, that recognition has been tardy. On Victorian goldfields Aboriginal guides were acting out what would appear to be a continuation of adaptation which had occurred in the exploratory and pastoral periods. DWA Baker, in his appraisal of the role which Aboriginal guides assumed in connection with Surveyor General, Thomas Mitchell, thought that the succession of guides employed by Mitchell during his four

expeditions in south-eastern Australia 'can be divided into four main groups which may be called hired help; passers on; camp followers; and professionals.'[377] Examples of all four types identified by Baker are readily identifiable in both the pastoral period and in the mining period, both in the northern districts of Australia and in Victoria. Reynold's examination of the northern Australia mining districts revealed a similar scenario to what occurred in Victoria, adding that:

> Frontier prospectors were often accompanied by and dependent upon, Aboriginal assistants in the same way as explorers and pioneer squatters had been before them. Their bushcraft, tracking ability and skill at finding water were all invaluable assets in the interior of the continent and could be directed at seeking evidence of mineralization in the same way that they were used to find good pastoral land and easy tracks across unknown country.[378]

In the event that an Aboriginal guide could not be procured, frontier prospectors often relied on Aboriginal paths, wells and directions from Aboriginal informants. Historian Les Blake discerned that the early route to the central Victorian goldfields was one blazed by Aboriginals that had been their traditional pathways.

> The track [to central Victoria] gained clearer definition in October 1851, when a group of intrepid diggers, eager to save time and miles, struck east from Wellington on the Murray. They took aboriginal pads from native well to well and tracks between the few lonely stations in the Long Desert of South Australia to make a fairly straight route to the border. On the Victorian side the Little Desert could be similarly crossed by ways already trodden by both Aboriginals and white men.[379]

It is almost certain that in the early period of gold mining non-Indigenous prospectors were at times following the trading routes / song-lines of Aboriginal people in the

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[377] G Baker, "Exploring with Aborigines: Thomas Mitchell and His Aboriginal Guides," Aboriginal History 22 (1998).p.36

[378] Reynolds, Black Pioneers. pp.96-7

[379] L Blake, Gold Escorts in Australia (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1993).p.20. Blake's summation is corroborated by miner's accounts such as Oliver Ragless whose party traveled to Mount Alexander from Adelaide only by procuring water from 'native wells'. See: Ragless, ed., Oliver's Diary: An 'Andkerchief of Eirth.

same way that the earlier frontier explorers and squatters had.[380] It is also likely that as in the pastoral period, in attempting to 'stay on one's country', a number of Aboriginal people attached themselves to groups of miners and at times led them to rich gold bearing sites just as many rich pastoral runs had been opened up initially by Aboriginal guides. It would appear that Baker has overlooked this type of guide, referring to them as 'camp followers', seemingly not recognizing the integral kinship relationships set in place by Aboriginal guides in their association with some non-Indigenous people. It is certainly plausible that some Aboriginal guides in the gold period were perhaps finding their niche in the new dominant economic culture, others for exotic goods, adventure and friendship/kinship. For some Aboriginal people it was probably a mixture of all these motivations.

UNWILLINGNESS TO GUIDE

Sometimes Aboriginal people were unwilling to guide the non-Indigenous travelers. Their reasons were as follows: firstly, there was a distinct uneasiness among some guides when not in one's own country, as discussed previously.[381] WT Dawson, the District Surveyor in the Baw Baw and Walhalla region in 1855, discerned from his Aboriginal informants / guides another reason for their uneasiness about traveling into certain regions which were associated with traditions which were life threatening. Dawson wrote:

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[380] Descriptions by pastoralists such as CB Hall, in the Halls Gap – Gariwerd region, attest to the frequent use of well made Aboriginal paths being utilized to great effect by non-Indigenous people on the frontier. See: Halls Gap & Grampians Historical Society, Victoria's Wonderland. pp.3-4

[381] AAC Le Souef wrote of his ('My Nangatta boys') Aboriginal guides 'Tommy and Toby', who were escorting cattle to the Ovens River goldfields, being attacked by 'strange Goulburn blacks' as they were out of their country. See: Le Souef, Personal Recollections of Early Victoria.. Seweryn Korzelinski, a miner on the central Victorian goldfields was aware that their usefulness as a guide to miners was limited 'on long journeys because they become frightened as soon as they cross out of the territory of their own tribe.' Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. p.18

> Although the country is occupied on both sides up to the very base, and in some instances, on a number of the spurs and a portion of the mountains themselves, yet there are peaks and ravines which as yet have never been trodden by a white man. Even the Aborigines recoil with horror-stricken countenances if asked to undertake a journey to the summit of some of them...Another place which no "blackfellow" will venture is described by them as a boiling chasm which if they approach they get drawn into and are never seen or heard of more.[382]

Secondly, Aboriginal cultural responsibilities took priority over non-Indigenous economic considerations. A party of gold miners who had secured a pact with some Djadjawurrung guides to escort them to Forest Creek gold diggings was disconcerted when their guides informed them that ceremonial rites took precedence over guiding, and that 'Eager as we were to get away, we were delayed for another evening, in order that a visit from some other friendly tribe might be signalized by a dance. This was their celebrated corroborry...'[383]

The heavily race and class-driven expectations of some non-Indigenous travelers about their Aboriginal guide's role and social standing was also problematic in retaining Aboriginal guides, as work relationships built on a sense of mutual affiliation were commonly considered a critical ingredient for success. Writers such as Francis Lancelott advising on the Australian colonies held out advice on the desirability of hiring Aboriginal guides and how to retain them in service. Rules of thumb on the matter included 'Those who have had long experience in the bush are always careful to avail themselves of the services of one or two trusty black attendants...As their services are given more from goodwill than from hope of reward, it is only from attachment to persons with whom they are well acquainted that they are ever prevailed upon to lend themselves as parties in an exploring

[382] WT Dawson cited in Adams, Mountain Gold. p.20
[383] Sherer, The Gold-Finder of Australia. p.131

expedition.'[384] AB Pierce, traveling along the Murray in the early 1860s, forsook this advice and nonchalantly 'hired a black boy for the heavy and dirty work' during the hot and dry season when the 'extreme heat was almost unbearable.' Pierce noted with some indignation and self-righteous bigotry that the 'black boy deserted and returned to his tribe, some of whom he met in that neighborhood – not quite unexpectedly, for desertion is wholly characteristic of the aborigines.'[385]

The perceived usefulness of Aboriginal guides on the goldfields was occasionally limited because they took non-Indigenous people only as far as the borders of their own country. This was an occurrence frequently reported upon in the exploratory and pastoral periods. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in Clarke's survey of the Alps in 1858, whereupon he had three guides leave him at or between Muriong and Mowamba and another two left at the junction of the Thredbo and Wallendibby Rivers suggesting that these places were borders to the country within which they had no right of ingress.[386] Robert Gow, in his travels (1860-1) in the pastoral districts of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, also gives an account of some of the difficulties when Aboriginal people were taken out of their country. Having been left behind for a while, Gow's guide, 'Captain Cadell', confessed to a high level of anxiety in country which he saw as 'too much wild'.[387] It is evident that during the gold period one of the functions of Aboriginal guides had dissipated. People such as Thomas Mitchell had previously recognized that one of the integral roles of a guide, especially in the exploratory period, and to a large extent in the pastoral period as well, was to reduce the risk of conflict with hostile Aboriginal people who had had no

[384] Lancelott, Australia as It Is: It's Settlements, Farms and Goldfields. pp. 50-1
[385] Leatherbee, ed., Knocking About: Being Some Adventures of Augustus Baker Pierce in Australia. p.62
[386] Clarke 1860 cited in Wesson, "The Aborigines of Eastern Victoria and Far South-Eastern New South Wales, 1830-1910: An Historical Geography." p.228
[387] R Gow, Journal, AIATSIS Ms, Canberra.

previous associations with non-Indigenous people. By the time of the gold rush in Victoria, very few tracts of auriferous country had been untrammeled by non-Indigenous people, and so this functionality was considerably diminished.

GETTING TO THE GOLDFIELDS WITH GUIDES

Some mining parties recruited Aboriginal guides to get them to the goldfields across Victoria. Pepper and De Araugo confirm that Omeo Aboriginal people were used by miners "as guides to the Omeo fields, making use of the fact that they still wandered in search of food, either hunting for it or getting rations in exchange for work".[388] Overlanding prospectors contended that the route from Adelaide to the Mt Alexander diggings could barely be described as a track, it was

> more a confoundment of blazed trees and tumbling rock cairns sketching the way from one waterhole to the next. Finding the flat, scrubby country hard to read, travelers regularly relied on Aborigines for directions to the nearest 'Billy Bung'. Aboriginal children along the route would sing out to passing horsemen, 'Are you off to the diggings?' One early traveler wrote, 'We frequently got a native to go a distance with us as a guide, for which we gave him a stick of tobacco and "plenty tucker", viz., damper and mutton, or a bellyful to eat.[389]

Official parties such as Gold Commissioner Tolmer's were observed using the services of Aboriginal guides to reach new goldfields, hitherto unexplored. Edward Snell, a miner trekking from South Australia to Victoria observed a 'Commissioner under the Pilotage of a Blackfellow going to some newly discovered diggings on the Wimmera.'[390] A tradition of employing Aboriginal guides by Surveyors-General,

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[388] P Pepper and Td Araugo, What Did Happen to the Aborigines of Victoria: Volume 1: The Kurnai of Gippsland (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1985). p.102

[389] From 'The Emigrant in Australia' p.71 cited in R Annear, Nothing but Gold: The Diggers of 1852 (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1999). pp.73-4

[390] T Griffiths, ed., The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell (North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1988). p.277. Sherer also noted the Commisioner of Police accompanied by an 'intelligent native' who

which had begun with colonization, was avidly continued in the gold mining period to great effect. The Assistant Surveyor-General of South Australia, John Maclaren, when given the crucial task of mapping the first direct route from Wellington to the Mount Alexander goldfields in March 1852, scouted around to collect all possible details about the kind of country he and his men would have to cross, gleaned some information about known water sources of water supply and 'engaged' an Aboriginal guide to lead his party to Mt Alexander.[391]

It was not solely official surveying parties who were reliant on Aboriginal guides when over-landing to the Victorian goldfields from South Australia. George Baker, a member of a prospecting party, recalled being totally dependent on Aboriginal guides when overlanding from Adelaide to the diggings at Castlemaine in central Victoria.

> We started to go through the "short desert" [Little Desert in western Victoria?], taking with us two blackfellows with their lubras and picanninies to show us where the water was. It was a very hot and windy day, and we had forgotten to take water with us. It was towards evening when the blackfellows found water, and we were in a very exhausted condition.[392]

John Chapple, on his journey from Adelaide to the Avoca goldfields also employed a number of Aboriginal guides including 'Black Solomon', 'King Tom' and an unidentified 'black boy', upon whom judging from the repeated references to bushfoods, it can be inferred that Chapple's party became reliant.[393]

RELIANCE ON GUIDES

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led them to water, hunted for the party and demonstrated his bush knowledge on numerous occasions during the journey. See: Sherer, The Gold-Finder of Australia. Chapter 32

[391] Blake, Gold Escorts in Australia. p.31

[392] Baker in Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. p.109. Ned Peters' party was also totally reliant on their Aboriginal guides. See: Blake, ed., A Gold Digger's Diaries by Ned Peters. p.24

[393] J Chapple, Diary, SLV Ms, Melbourne.

A number of miners were accompanied by Aboriginal guides who on occasion were the actual discoverers of new gold deposits. Sadly, the pioneering role of Indigenous guides in the opening up of goldfields alongside non-Indigenous gold miners is rarely expressed in the historiography of gold mining and it was also rare for Aboriginal guides to be mentioned by name in the historic records.[394] Historian Barry Collett discerned from both oral and archival evidence that small groups of anonymous Kurnai were 'often' members of prospecting parties in South Gippsland, and were at times instrumental in their survival and viability. In 1867, a party made up of three unidentified Kurnai and two non-Indigenous prospectors came close to finding the first fortune at what was to become the Stockyard Creek diggings. Autumn rains and a lack of supplies forced them to abandon the diggings, reporting they were only able to survive by relying on the meat from koalas and other animals caught by the Kurnai.[395]

Texts such as RW Christie's and GD Gray's history of the Omeo goldfields, *Victoria's Forgotten Goldfield* and K Fairweather's *Time to Remember: The History of Gold Mining on the Tambo* refer fleetingly to the fact that Aboriginal guides were often instrumental in the gold story that unfolded, yet as outlined below do not receive recognition from these authors.[396] Fairweather provides a significant allusion to the possible influence Aboriginal people played, especially in their role as guides on the more inhospitable goldfields of Victoria, recounting that on one journey to the goldfields 'we escaped Tongio Hill by coming up Swift's Creek (now so called), and had a blackfellow for a guide. Blacks were numerous in Omeo then.'[397] This placing

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[394] Wesson noted the frequency with which Surveyors such as Dawson failed to identify their Aboriginal guides' names. Wesson, "The Aborigines of Eastern Victoria and Far South-Eastern New South Wales, 1830-1910: An Historical Geography." p.229

[395] B Collett, Wednesdays Closest to the Full Moon (Carlton: MUP, 1994). pp. 56-7

[396] Christie, Tracks to the Woods Point and Jordan Goldfields.

[397] Fairweather, Time to Remember: The History of Gold Mining on the Tambo and Its Tributaries. p.16

of Aboriginal people outside goldfields history is amply demonstrated — as a representative example — in Lloyd's 1981 history of gold discovery in *Gold at Gaffney Creek*:

> Accompanied by Big Bill the Native, [Bob] Wilson pushed up the Goulburn above Gaffney's Junction at the beginning of 1860, and finally reached the future site of Wood's Point, where they found good prospects. By this time their moleskins and flannels were torn to strips, they were out of flour and tobacco and reliant on possums for food.[398]

Lloyd's narrative privileges Wilson, the non-Indigenous 'discoverer' of gold, while reducing indigenous involvement to a subordinate clause ('accompanied by Big Bill the native'). History leaves untold the likelihood that this discoverer may never have 'found good prospects' without the active participation of an Indigenous guide.

Another revealing exemplar of this historical oversight is to be found in the details relating to the discovery of one of the richest reefs on the Ballarat field. In a letter to the *Geelong Advertiser*, Paul Gootch, a miner in the Canadian and Prince Regent gullies near Ballarat, reported in September 1852 'that the way in which the Eureka diggings were discovered was on the occasion of my sending out a blackfellow to search for a horse who picked up a nugget on the surface. Afterwards I sent out a party to explore who proved that gold was really to be found in abundance'.[399] This lack of recognition is re-run in the case of the Ararat diggings. At the Linton diggings, south of Ballarat, American miner Charles Ferguson met a large number of the 'Wardy yallock' (Wathawurrung) Aboriginal people in 1851. According to Ferguson,

> There was one black fellow of this tribe who told me he knew where there was plenty of gold, about sixty miles away, and offered to take me or Walter there.

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[398] B Lloyd and H Combes, Gold at Gaffneys Creek (Wangaratta: Shoestring Bookshop, 1981).
[399] Gootch, "Canadian and Prince Regent Gullies."

> We made arrangements to go with him and take one other person also ... They were gone about two weeks. They got gold, but the boys said it was the last place ever made and they would not stop there if they could make a pound weight of gold a day. The same place, but a short time after, turned out to be a good gold district and a great quartz region, known as the Ararat diggings.[400]

There are isolated examples of published regional histories which do reveal the true importance of Aboriginal guides in the search for goldfields. One such example is HW Forster's history of Waranga which relates a legend of the first 'discoverer':

> No record can be found of the first discoverer of the field, though legend has it that a party of diggers camped at what is now the north end of High Street, Rushworth, and fell in with a tribe of aborigines. One digger produced a match box of containing gold, and asked a lubra: 'This fellow he stop along here?' the lubra's reply is said to have been: 'Plenty fella all same he stop along here'. The blacks are said to have taken the diggers to what came to be known as Main Gully, where the lubra plucked up grass, and gold showed.[401]

Even this account, however, does not exhort the clans' active participation in the founding or discovery of a new goldfield (this reference to Aboriginal people does not appear in the book's index and is relegated by the author to the status of a 'good story') though even the author considers the veracity of it to be 'likely'. The implication that the unidentified clan was not the discoverer is seemingly due to the records not revealing their on-going association with that goldfield.

ATTITUDES OF GUIDES AND THE GUIDED

Some measure of the diversity of interface between Aboriginal people who worked as guides and non-Indigenous miners is portrayed in the following account of a party of

[400] Ferguson, Experiences of a Forty-Niner in Australia and New Zealand.
[401] Forster, Waranga. p.19

miners trekking to new goldfields in the Ovens River area. A lengthy quote is provided as it vividly illustrates the changing relationships and attitudes from both sides of the inter-cultural divide.

> Went to Ovens with Martin Tully, Jimmy Lyons, Andy Clair and Patsy Porker. We had not enough money to buy much tucker. Started on a new track and had no tucker with us. It was raining heavily and we had nothing to eat. Pushed on till we came to a sheep station by chance. Owned by a man named Clarke. He was very good to us. Told us that where we were going there was no tracks. We should take a black guide and got us two from the run on the way. These blacks had a gun each and fearful lot of dogs. We had only one old muzzler loader. Before we went very far they demanded grog. We would not give it, they wanted to walk behind. We were told by Mr. Clarke to keep them in front always. Pestered us for the grog, we gave them some. Then they said they were hungry and set out at a great pace for a tank we could see across the plain. We heard shots and thought that they were shooting at someone. When we got there it was ducks and their dogs were bringing them out. They had a fire lit and cooking the ducks feathers and all, eating them before they were quite cooked. Made Martin Tully sick. We were very anxious to get on and they wanted to camp. One nigger jibbed. King Billy came with us, it was nearly dark, we saw a fire and thinking it might be friends, wanted to go to it but King Billy said "No fear, wild blackfellows kill me all same you" so we cut through the bush. We could not quite feel we could trust him and thought he might be leading us to these wild blacks. It was very dark and we marveled at him knowing the way he was going. Every now and then someone would ask him "How far?" till at last he said in an impatient voice "Long way yet". About midnight through the thick bush he brought us to a shepherd's hut...Paid old King Billy, who was a good old black. Lyons knocked up and had to go to bed. We went on the next day and old Billy did not notice that Lyons was not with us. He saw his swag on the verandah and thought he had forgotten it and walked three miles after us with it.[402]

Notwithstanding the sometimes difficult cross-cultural negotiations required to recruit Aboriginal guides and the crass attitudes of many miners towards Aboriginal cultural matters, there was a discernable need filled by Aboriginal guides that rendered them indispensable. John Sherer's guide book for potential immigrants to the goldfields, *The Gold Finder of Australia,* is representative of this approach to Aboriginal guides, noting that he and his mining party 'after great difficulty we were happily enabled to

[402] SM Walker, Glenlyon Connections (Stanthorpe: Walker, 1993). p.227

complete a bargain with two of the natives [Djadjawurrung guides] to put us upon a track which would lead us to Forest Creek.' Sherer acknowledged that for all the considerable effort his party had spent in procuring two Djadjawurrung guides 'For this piece of service we would almost have given all the gold we had.'[403] Cultural misunderstandings were predictable given the preconceived ideas each party often probably had of each other. Sherer,[404] for example, perhaps erroneously considered that 'gold was of no value to them than the pebbles upon which they walked.' But an exchange of valued goods and occasionally a semblance of cross-cultural dialogue such as knowing that 'the native name for the hill known as Mt Macedon was *GEBOOR* was enough to give the clue to a perfect understanding between us.'[405] HE Haustorfer similarly recounted in his reminiscences of the gold period his great relief at being rescued whilst in the dark bush by unidentified 'blacks' who beckoned him to lie down near their fires. After spending a night under considerable apprehension as he 'felt all sorts of misgivings, thinking they might be longing for a White Roast', in the morning he was relieved when 'the oldest black told his lubra to show me the track' and was shown the direction to his destination.[406] The supremacy of Aboriginal skill in the bush was not lost on Aboriginal people who were noted to revel in the role of guide and to be animated about their proffered position, evinced by JD Mereweather's observations of Simon, his Aboriginal guide who: 'swaggered up to me with a jaunty air at an early hour, all prepared and equipped for his journey.'[407]

THE COMFORT OF TRAVELLING WITH GUIDES

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[403] Sherer, The Gold-Finder of Australia. p.131
[404] Though it is now considered that Sherer was an 'arm chair' writer, and did not in fact pen the stories of the goldfields himself the accounts that he wrote of were clearly drawn from miners who had visited the goldfields, and therefore are guardedly used in this study where they corroborate other manuscripts.
[405] Sherer, The Gold-Finder of Australia. p.131
[406] H Haustorfer, Reminiscences, NLA MS, Canberra.
[407] Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. pp.146-7

The usefulness of Aboriginal guides was not limited to finding a particular place, locating and preparing food, procuring water and carrying supplies. The role of a guide was, and still is, not just about getting there but traveling through the bush comfortably. Bush travelers were often the recipients of Aboriginal bush lore which improved their quality of stay. A story by Katherine McKay about her father is indicative of this smoothing of the bush for non-Indigenous travelers.

> Once Father told us of how, after a long waterless journey, he and his native guide came on a waterhole in an almost dry creek. Father, being very thirsty, took his pannikin to dip a draught out of the film-covered water; but the black guide restrained him warningly, and gathered a bunch of coarse grass that was growing about the creek and placed it on the surface of the water, first dexterously removing a patch of the film or scum, and slowly pressed the pannikin on the filter of dried grass until it was filled with clear water.[408]

Near Bet Bet in central Victoria, Patrick Costello, a shepherd on a pastoral property keen to utilize an Aboriginal guide's expertise and thus save himself unwarranted exertion, asked 'if he would guide me across the hills...To go across country the distance was only about seven miles, whereas if we took the road the distance was 15 miles. The blackfellow agreed to do so, and we started off and reached the station safely.'[409] The occurrence of floods stymied many prospecting parties or travelers[410] and made traveling a misery. At Moe, one over-landing party 'afraid to cross the

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[408] K McK, Old Days and Gold Days (Melbourne: McK, 1910). p.20

[409] P Costello, Patrick Costello; Narrative of His Life as a Port Phillip Pioneer, RHSV, Melbourne.p.16. Other testimonies mirror Costello's. One reminiscence in 1854 briefly noted 'I found my way, under the guidance of a blackfellow to Loyyang'. Cited in Leslie and Cowie, eds., The Wind Still Blows: Early Gippsland Diaries. p.20

[410] Westwood engaged 'Shephard', an Aboriginal guide during his trek through the Moira region, depending on him with his life. See: J Westwood, Journal of Jj Westwood Being an Account of Eight Years Itinerary to the Townships and Squatting Stations of Victoria (Melbourne: 1865). p.401. In the Orbost district, an Aboriginal named Joe Banks rescued a sick non-Indigenous man during the floods by 'making a canoe out of a sheet of bark from the roof and placing the sick man in it, swam through the turbulent waters, towing the canoe and its helpless occupant to safety.' Cited in Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District, (n.a: n.a, 1972). p.8

creek on account of the flood and having eaten all their provisions' received succor from an Aboriginal guide whose prodigious bush skills the travelers depended upon:

> Before dark a black gin came over in a canoe from the accommodation hut on the other side of the creek, having heard the travellers cooeeing. They told her they wanted something to eat, but it was too dangerous for her to cross the water again that night. A good fire was kept burning, but it was a wretched time. It rained heavily, a gale of wind was blowing, and trees kept falling in all directions. Scott, the hutkeeper, sent the gin over in the canoe next morning with a big damper, tea, sugar, and meat, which made a very welcome breakfast for hungry travelers...they resolved to try and cross the creek at all risks, preferring to face the danger of death by drowning rather than to die slowly by starvation...Scott was obliged to accompany them to the next stations for rations. He left the gin behind, having no anxiety about her. While he was away she could feed sumptuously on grubs, crabs and opossums.[411]

GUIDING ON WATER

Perhaps one of the most under-valued contributions Aboriginal people made to the new Colonial monetarist economy was the one of guiding people and stock across the river systems of Australia. Explorers and drovers utilized Aboriginal ferrying expertise on a constant basis as it afforded them the most efficient and safest mode of river pilotage, in remote areas where no other means of transportation was available. Hubert De Castella's description of Aboriginal people guiding large numbers of people, cattle and supplies across the Murray River in the 1850s was a common one:[412] 'Crossing the Murray, which is half a kilometer wide at that spot [junction of

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[411] Dunderdale, The Book of the Bush. p.280

[412] Aboriginal people on the Murray were described as rescuers of non-Indigenous peoples' goods and chattels, and would consider 'nothing loath to take a good dive, fetching up anything that may thus found its way to the bed of the river"Bark Canoes," *Illustrated Melbourne Post* 1862. Joseph Westwood, an evangelist in the Murray region noted that a 'blackfellow paddled me across the Murray in a canoe'. See: Westwood, Journal of Jj Westwood Being an Account of Eight Years Itinerary to the Townships and Squatting Stations of Victoria. p.401. Likewise Mereweather noted several occasions where a 'black who managed a frail skiff' safely conveyed he and his party across numerous river crossings. Moreover, he also recorded the prolificness of Aboriginal people and their crafts, noting at Moama they 'have twenty five canoes with them.' See: Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. p.145,193 & 209. AA Le Souef's accounts of crossing the Murray at Swan Hill

the Murray and Darling], was a large number of savages, [who] were camped on the river banks and had boats ready to help the travelers cross.' De Castella described the aplomb and adroitness with which the risky task of guiding people, stock and supplies across was often accomplished much to their amazement.[413]

> The rains had swollen the river so much that Mr. Darchy stayed there camping for a week waiting for a favourable moment to go across. The blacks were particularly useful for transporting men and supplies from the other side of water. They built boats with gum bark, and at spots where roads crossed the river they already had to go a long way to find suitable trees. When the boats were ready the blacks took over a party of men one by one and their horses were sent swimming to them so that they could receive the stock. When the whole herd had crossed the river the men who had stayed behind drove their horses across, and the blacks took them over in turn. It was also the blacks who took across the supplies...Sometimes when the river was not very wide and the current not very swift, one black put himself at the front of the cart and another at the back, and then slipping their heads between the planks it was made of, they would swim across with this heavy load on their backs.[414]

Many miners and travelers such as Alfred Howitt who conducted geological research in Gippsland (1875) also depended on their Aboriginal guides to construct and pilot vessels for ferrying them across rivers and entrusted them to deliver vital stores and provisions to forward positions.[415]

> I wanted to examine a long portion of the Mitchell River which runs through horizontal strata and which are almost unknown, I therefore sent up two blackfellows "Long Harry" and "Charley Boy" under the care of a trustworthy man to Tabberaberra station at the head of the Gorges. Here they made two bark canoes by the time I arrived from Crooked River and the following morning we started on our voyage...Long Harry [sat] behind with a piece of green wattle

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mirror De Castella, with effusive praise of Aboriginal people's skills in both building and handling their crafts. See: Le Souef, Personal Recollections of Early Victoria.

[413] Mereweather exclaimed: 'When I considered how wide and deep the river was, and how strong the current ran, I considered I had great cause for thankfulness in getting safely over.' Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. pp.149-150

[414] Castella, Australian Squatters. p.128

[415] Frederick Burchett wrote of how during floods 'we had to carry rations to outstations in a bark canoe...manufactured by the blacks in a very few minutes' C Burchett, Letters, RHSV MS, Melbourne. p.82

> bark in each hand about 6 in. by 12 in. which he used as a paddle...The other canoe contained Charley and the provisions for three days.[416]

At Murray River crossings into Victoria numerous miners over-landing from New South Wales and Adelaide[417] shared the same experience as JH Trevena who recorded in his 'Reminiscences of a Journey to the Victorian Diggings' how a party of miner families were paddled across by Aboriginal people in canoes and their bullock drays pulled across by Aboriginal people on the opposite bank.[418] At the Campaspe, Ovens and Serpentine Rivers there are numerous references from miners who required Aboriginal assistance from guides for 'taking the horses and cart through the R[iver] and paying a native with a canoe to cross our goods.'[419] The time-saving aspect of employing an Aboriginal guide was not lost on Hubert De Castella, when crossing the Goulburn River. De Castella, on his way to the Bendigo goldfields found the Goulburn had been swollen over-night by a rain storm and consequently went

> back down to the Seymour ferry when some blue smoke rising from a clump of wattle led us to a group of blacks sitting around their fire. We went up to them and speaking to the most intelligent looking I offered him a shilling if he would make a boat and take me across. My offer was immediately accepted and taking off his possum skin which was his only clothing my man asked me to dismount so that he could take my saddle. 'Make the boat first', I told him. 'Canoe sit down alonga water', he replied with a cunning smile, which meant that he already had one available by the bank...the black put my saddle in then told me to get in, which I did half convinced that I must admit that I was going to take a dip...Slowly and peacefully he took us over the dead water of the little inlet we were in...'Be careful of my saddle when we get to the other side', I said,

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[416] Howitt Papers, sourced from Attwood, ed., A Life Together, a Life Apart. A History of Relations between Europeans and Aborigines. p.139

[417] On a journey from Adelaide to the Victorian diggings JH Walker's party employed a party of 'blackfellows' to 'drag a horse out of a morass' and take their women folk, their dray 'and all your things' across several rivers by 'canoes which are very useful, made out of a log hollowed out.' J Walker, Memoirs of Joseph Henry Walker, SLV Ms, Melbourne. pp.6-8

[418] Sourced from *Kapunda Herald*, cited in J Faull, The Cornish in Australia, Australian Ethnic Heritage Series, ed. Micheal Ciglar (Melbourne: AE Press, 1983). p.52. Also see George Sugden who recorded 'The men would get over [swollen rivers] in blacks dugouts...dray ferried over by blacks' in: G Sugden, Pioneering Life in Outback Stations of Victoria, RHSV, Melbourne. p.21

[419] Blyth, Diary.

> because the edges of the boat were not two inches above water level. 'All right, everything's right', he replied.[420]

Many parties were circumspect about the 'primitive constructions' at which they were entrusting their lives but there appears to be no record of them capsizing. One such fear-filled traveler was Edwin Middleton who 'crossed the Murray in a native canoe, a sheet of bark nearly flat. I did not return in it, for I did not relish it, too many blackheads bobbing up and down quite close to us. I fully expected [the canoe] to be upset when they caught hold of the canoe, clamouring after tobacco.'[421] AG Pierce, gold miner turned photographer, noted that the:

> natives aided us in fording the Serpentine and getting our [photographic] supplies across in their canoes. These boats are of the most primitive construction, being nothing more than a large strip of bark cut to the correct size, with pointed ends, from the eucalyptus tree and dried in the sun, and shaped by a cross stick in each end. The heat of the sun naturally curls the bark and produces a rude boat.[422]

Judging by some accounts the assistance of Aboriginal guides when fording rivers was not merely time saving or allowed for an 'uncommon neatness' as Thomas Woolner described his observations of two Aboriginal people crossing the Ovens River.[423] Gold-seekers such as Samuel Mossman, Thomas Banister and others,[424] attested that it was only with the assistance of an Aboriginal guide that their party survived the Murray River crossing.

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[420] Castella, Australian Squatters. pp.135-6
[421] Middleton, A Description of the Life and Times in Victoria in the 1860's by a Young Colonist.
[422] Leatherbee, ed., Knocking About: Being Some Adventures of Augustus Baker Pierce in Australia. pp.36-7
[423] T Woolner, Diary, NLA MS, Canberra.
[424] Mrs Campbell claimed to being saved, along with her sister from drowning whilst crossing a river near Benalla by an Aboriginal guide named 'Captain Cook'. Campbell, Rough and Smooth or Ho! For an Australian Goldfield. pp.68-9

> We had some difficulty in fording the back-water course of the river, which we were compelled to do in consequence of the accident to the bridge; and unless we had had the assistance of a native, who directed us which way we should incline when we were in the river, we might have failed in safely getting over.[425]

Others such as James Dannock also attested to their indispensability when crossing the Murray. Dannock, suffering badly from dysentery, and not responding to Aboriginal medicines, entrusted his life to some Aboriginal people who got him across the Murray.

> I took bad with the dysentery and the black lubras [kindly?] got me wattle gum and when I did not get better they said 2 days that fellow go bung [dead] so I thought I had better clear out and got the blacks to put me over the river in a canoe.[426]

Off the goldfields too, pastoralists such as FR Godfrey were struck by the usefulness and utilitarian nature of Aboriginal canoes, especially noting in his journal the debt owed to the Aboriginal water carriers who rescued "two tons of trussed hay in a fine canoe made by the blacks" on one occasion in September 1852.[427]

GIVING DIRECTIONS

Yet another aspect of an Aboriginal guide's job was to track both people and stock, a task which was performed with great regularity and efficiency across Victoria's goldfields. Frequently, passing references (often anonymous), to Aboriginal trackers

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[425] Mossman and Bannister, Australia, Visited and Revisited. p.134
[426] Dannock`, Autobiography. p.63
[427] 'The Aboriginals were often sent across by canoe for urgently needed goods – flour, tea, sugar, tobacco and the like, which were loaded onto waiting drays.' Cited in Fernihurst District History Committee, Reflections from the Kinypaniel. p.21

appear in regional histories.[428] As in the pastoral period, or perhaps more so, Aboriginal expertise in guiding lost non-Indigenous people to their desired location was frequently called upon, and answered. A miner lost in the thick bush surrounding Mt Alexander, in central Victoria, recalled how he came upon an encampment of presumably Djadjawurrung Aboriginal people who directed him to Forest Creek:

> I had not gone far before I felt convinced that I had lost my way...Just as it was getting dark, I saw smoke ascending from among the trees...It flashed across my mind that it was the abode of blacks...On getting near, two men of the same description as the former came out, and I inquired the way. They told me I had been walking away from home the whole day. The sun had now set. They gave me the direction of Forest Creek, and away I went into the bush again.[429]

Failed gold miner, GC Fead, relayed how he was indebted to an unidentified Aboriginal man and three Aboriginal women who guided him and his valuable stock through a region notorious for the risks it posed to human and animal life.

> Down the Jacob's Pinch they [500 head of cattle] went stumbling and sliding much against their will, our horse's feet being almost on a level with their backs. At the foot a blackfellow, with three gins, offered their services to help us through the rocks and we found them very useful. Once clear of the rocks we camped for the night, the Blacks near us, gladdened with the tobacco and rations which they received as payment for their work.[430]

Later in his chronicle Fead related how he had gone to a rush at Gibbo Creek and whilst trying to accompany a drunken friend safely back to his cabin through a dangerous steep sideling they: 'passed by a camp of Blacks, and I called out for one of them to go with us over the roughest part.' An unidentified Aboriginal person obliged

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[428] A Mitchell, Fernshaw the Forgotten Village (Healesville: Mitchell, 2001), R Christie and W Gray, Victoria's Forgotten Goldfield: History of Dargo and Crooked River (Sale: Christie, 1981). Ronan, ed., Early Dederang 1854-1956 from the Notebook of Micheal James Goonan, D O'Bryan, Pioneering East Gippsland (Gisborne: O'Bryan, 1983).

[429] S Mossman, ed., Emigrants' Letters from Australia (London: Addey and Co., 1853). p.35

[430] Fead, "Notes of an Unsettled Life." p.32

to guide them on their perilous sojourn, and so the drunken 'Breton led the way groping with his hands along the bank. I followed with a firm grip of his shirt. The Black brought up the rear holding on to my belt.' Comically, the Breton having dropped his bottle of rum avowed to slide down a rocky ravine to retrieve his treasured bottle. Fead stated that he 'held on to his shirt as for a matter of life and death, the Black holding firmly on to me, but it was too much for me and he slipped through my grasp.' Remarkably the Breton survived. No mention is made of what became of the Aboriginal guide.[431] Aboriginal guides were also at times employed for more nefarious purposes according to Ballarat miner, Thomas Pierson, who maintained that the 'Bushrangers get them for guides.'[432]

The surety which Aboriginal guides and trackers afforded non-Indigenous people is vividly illustrated by frequent references in George Sugden's reminiscences of his pioneering experiences both on and off the goldfields in which he relates numerous men and stock being expertly tracked and guided to safety over a period of time.

> "Sugden take Sandy the black boy and see if you can find the man [lost in the bush, and subsequently rescued]". I was quite in his hands and knew that as long as I stuck to him I was safe...a black tracker was employed who can easily pick up your tracks [shepherd rescued]...I was rescued by Sandy the black tracker...rescued by black trackers again...my eyes got so bad that I could not see. I was given a black gin to look after me and lead me about.[433]

Very close personal relationships between Aboriginal guides and non-Indigenous people were established out in the bush. In the letters of drovers and miners there is a palpable bond, a camaraderie often borne out of being dependent for their lives on their 'sable brethren' in regions where the sourcing of safe drinking water was a

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[431] Fead, "Notes of an Unsettled Life." p.35
[432] Pierson, Diaries.
[433] Sugden, Pioneering Life in Outback Stations of Victoria. Pp.85-96

matter of life and death. For some non-Indigenous people, the relationship was decidedly a benevolent master-servant relationship, permeated by overtones of 'ownership'.

> Had it not been for my own little black boy – Jacky that would have been the last of me - but he saw the black fellow and gave the alarm to my men. About my Black boy Jacky I will tell you more I have him still he is my right hand man – he saved my life then...he has been with me know [now] 15 years and a more faithful servant no man could have in fact he considers himself as my private property and I can assure you he takes far more interest in my affairs than almost any white man and in many instances he is worth gold to me for he is a splendid tracker...you at home could not credit the way this boy can follow a lost horse or bullock and fetch it...out of the many horses and cattle I have owned I never have lost one since I owned the Blackboy.[434]

Assertions of 'ownership' were not uncommon towards Aboriginal guides, particularly in the pastoral and exploratory periods of colonial Victoria. Representative of this view is Charles Lousada's reminiscences of a selector who 'had a black boy "Toby" with that bush instinct peculiar to the race who he would take away down south towards Lardner and McDonalds track. Ham [the land selector] would go into the scrub anywhere, and when he had been in a good way, would say to Toby: "Home Toby" and the black boy would bring him straight out.'[435] The rarity of this overbearingly paternalistic 'ownership' of guides in the gold mining period is almost certainly because miners were predominately short-term economically driven and thus may have viewed such 'possessions' as an encumbrance, preferring instead to make short term contracts. It is also more likely the ephemeral state of the goldfields and hence the lusting after one rich field after another involving many Aboriginal boundaries to be crossed was a distinct disincentive for Aboriginal people to 'attach' themselves to non-Indigenous brethren. Some prospecting party leaders

[434] Gow, Journal.Also see: R Salisbury, Letter, NLA MS, Canberra.
[435] C Lousada, Old Brandy Creek and Other Reminiscences, RHSV, Melbourne. p.8

who had forged strong ties with individual Aboriginal guides were able to exploit the remarkable skills of their aides when crossing extremely rugged terrain. Angus McMillan, a prominent squatter in the Gippsland district employed the services of 'Black Jeremy and Billy' to cut a track through the Alps to the goldfields in 1864. The numerous references to the two Aboriginal guides in McMillan's journal of the trip are testimony to the integral role they played and the forging of reliance placed on them.

> I started with Mr. Jones and black Jeremy to mark the line, found it fearfully scrubby for four miles, had great difficulty getting through, however with the assistance of Jeremy who was on the range before, the line was marked to clear ground...Mr. Jeremy caught three blackfish...Started with Bill and Jeremy to clear a track...accompanied me to Omeo diggings...Jeremy made his appearance with the stray horse...Started with Jeremy to examine the spur at 10am we encountered a snow storm. Poor Jeremy got quite a fright and got so cold that he could not mark the trees, we took shelter in a hollow tree...I started with Jeremy and three men to clear a track on the spur.[436]

Travelers on the goldfields noted how difficult they found it to 'trace out a comparatively frequented road' let alone the dangerous task of setting out on a new path. Several written and visual[437] testimonies in the goldfield's historical records attest to the often tragic outcomes of not employing an Aboriginal guide when attempting to traverse from one field to another.

This chapter has sought to reveal the very significant and varied role Aboriginal guides fulfilled especially in the initial alluvial gold rush period when vast tracts of Victoria remained trackless. Some guides appear to have taken on the role spontaneously – showing new goldfields, rescuing, providing food, liaising, warning,

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[436] R Christie, Across the Alps (Stratford: High Country, 1989). pp.23-36

[437] Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3, Hancock, ed., Glimpses of Life in Victoria by a Resident. See accompanying artwork by goldfields artist ST Gill depicting an unlucky digger.

trading and naming features in the landscape. It has been demonstrated that in the historic documents there are many testimonies of miners, surveyors and other travelers in the Victorian auriferous regions making it their business to try to obtain an Aboriginal guide or being dependent on Aboriginal guides.

The significance of Aboriginal guides, especially in the gold rush period, has sadly not been given its due merit. A greater amount of recognition has been reserved for Aboriginal trackers and the Native Police who when available were recruited to locate and rescue lost travelers who forsook the comfort and experience of having Aboriginal guides,[438] a topic taken up in the next chapter.

[438] See goldfield artists ST Gill's '*The Unlucky Digger*' or FR Godfrey's graphic account of a hapless traveler, in Fernihurst District History Committee, Reflections from the Kinypaniel.p.34. Mereweather noted in 1852 'To lose oneself in this district is a serious matter…I hear of many accidents and disasters which have occurred in my district during my short absence in Melbourne.' Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. p.155. AA Le Souef gave an account of an 'excellent bushman' who perished in the Mallee. See: Le Souef, Personal Recollections of Early Victoria.

CHAPTER FIVE: TRACKERS and NATIVE POLICE

The ability to track or to 'read' the landscape, a highly developed knowledge and skill refined over the millennia by Aboriginal people, was immediately transferable to the needs of the non-Indigenous colonists. Tracking had immediate applications which soon were utilized in many non-Indigenous applications, both before and during (and after) the gold rush period. Gary Presland, in his study *'For God's sake send the trackers...'* provided an evaluation of the relationships between members of the Victorian Police and Aboriginal men from Queensland, and posits that the Aboriginal trackers:

> exercised skills which were outside the ambit of most Europeans, and the use of which was the major reason for their association with the police. The abilities and knowledge they shared made them a valuable asset to their police employers, and a source of wonder to a wider public. Use of the art of tracking in a context in a context of European law and order is a comparatively recent innovation, but it is only the context which is new; in Aboriginal societies the skills are time-honored and traditional ones. The expertise displayed by blacktrackers, which has often been described as 'uncanny', 'eerie' and even 'magical', has been developed as an integral part of the complex web of interconnections between people and land which is the fundamental characteristic of Aboriginal society. The use of this craft in a European setting is an example of the way in which Aborigines have successfully adapted the elements of their traditional lifeways to a new world order.[439]

Like their Queenslander or Murri counterparts, the predominant role of Victorian blacktrackers on the Victorian goldfields was in the context of non-Indigenous law and order, and subsequently Presland's summation of the Queensland blacktrackers role and contribution to the new 'order' has a number of parallels to Victorian blacktrackers on the goldfields.

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[439] G Presland, For God's Sake, Send the Trackers (Melbourne: Victoria Press, 1998). p.1

The extraordinary successes of the blacktrackers must have ensured they were loathed and feared by the criminal class. One of the first instances of the Victorian Police Force calling on the services of Victorian Aboriginal trackers was during the pursuit of two convict escapees from Van Diemens Land in September 1853. The two bushrangers had landed in Victoria, committed a series of hold-ups and were successfully tracked to a hold-out in the Gisborne area.[440] Even after alluvial mining had petered out, the usefulness of blacktrackers proved to be indisputable.[441] Bushrangers such as Powers were traced and captured with the aid of blacktrackers such as Donald who identified Power's hide out when the white officers could not. "It was then just daylight, and the mist was rolling up the hills, rendering it almost impossible in some places to distinguish it from smoke; but Donald, after one look, pointed straight up the gully, and with dilated eyes and nostrils, uttered in a suppressed tone '[s]Moke! Moke!'. With the presence of Power's campfire traced by Donald, Powers was readily apprehended.[442] The murderers of a gold buyer at Omeo in 1860 were likewise tracked and handed over to the police by several unidentified 'natives'.[443] Not just gold thieves were traced by blacktrackers however.[444] On the pastoral stations their tracking expertise was considered with mystical awe and solemn respect. It was during the gold period that their skills of tracking cattle or sheep were particularly invaluable as a result of the dearth of non-Indigenous

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[440] G Brown, G Presland and R Stavely, In the Performance of Duty; the Murder and Assault of Victorian Police 1837-1988 (Melbourne: Victoria Police Historical Society, 1994). pp.19-22

[441] In 1899, at the Christmas Mine near Bulumwaal in East Gippsland, a case of theft and assault occurred, whereby plates from a battery, with the gold with which they were coated were stolen. As a result 'the police were called in, as well as blacktrackers, who followed the tracks, pointing out particles of amalgam which had fallen off, right to the Bulumwaal Battery.'K Fairweather, Bedrock (Essay: Fairweather, 1986). p.36

[442] A Haydon, The Trooper Police of Australia (London: Melrose, 1911). p.239

[443] Christie and Gray, Victoria's Forgotten Goldfield: History of Dargo and Crooked River. p.16

[444] Two hundred oaks, elm and other trees were planted out by Camberwell Council in 1879, only for them to be uprooted and stolen, so the Council hired blacktrackers to catch the vandals. G Blainey, City of Camberwell (Melbourne: Lothian, 1980). p.112. Near Yackadandah too, blacktrackers were employed (circa 1880) to find a "fire bug". See: Ronan, ed., Early Dederang 1854-1956 from the Notebook of Micheal James Goonan. p.12

workers, due to them deserting to the goldfields. Lawrence Struilby's observations of non-Indigenous people's awed reactions to blacktrackers 'wonderful power' are atypical.

> The blacks began to be very useful to us, some of them at least. Some of them had powers of tracking cattle, more surely than a hound would fox or hare; though they did it all by eye. It was amusing to see the chief, after a stiff bargain, hire out a tracker to follow a stray mob of cattle or horses. You would take him to the spot where they were last seen; where he would go deliberately to work to see and measure the track. You must not hurry him...Through scrub and stream, and river and forest, and over sand or rock, he will go, till he brings you to your object, whether it is alive or dead. When he discovers dropping of the cattle, or a blade of grass cut by them, he can tell within a few hours or miles of their whereabouts. Many a fine bullock or heifer they saved for us then; and more for myself afterwards. The kangaroo, opossum, emu, kangaroo-rat, or even the grub, they trace with equal precision. It is as if they could concentrate all their power in the sense of sight.[445]

However, it was the tracing of individuals or parties of people who were lost in the bush which was the premier task which trackers were predominately called upon to perform prior to and throughout the gold period. Often the blacktrackers were called in when all other efforts had failed to locate the lost person, making the task even more onerous due to the obliteration of marks by the trampling underfoot of the previous searchers.[446] Even in these circumstances their prodigious services were warmly admired by writers such as Robert Brough Smyth who marveled at the 'the skill and intelligence of the Black tracker',[447] and Francis Lancelott who described the

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[445] Graham, ed., Observations and Experiences During 25 Years of Bush Life in Australia. pp.129-30 Robert Gow engaged 'a native black to travel with us' and drew upon Aboriginal knowledge and skill to track expensive horses and cattle. See: Gow, Journal.

[446] This was the case in Daylesford in central Victoria where several children wandered off from their house and black trackers were sought only when all other attempts had failed, but the efforts of the search parties had obliterated the tracks of the children.

[447] RB Smyth, Correspondence, SLV Ms, Melbourne. Several reports in *The Argus* describe how 'as a last resort engaged the assistance of black trackers' in investigations concerning stolen mail bags from the Ararat coach, finding the remains of a deceased person and locating a person's body who had drowned in a swollen river. See: *Argus* 13 July 1871, .

pitiful story of a 14 year old girl who had been missing in the bush for ten days before it was 'deemed indispensable' to call for their assistance, but it was too late.

> They however, did their part very well. On being told where the girl was last seen to enter the scrub, they went down instantly on their hands and knees, and with their large, sooty eyes, scanned every blade of grass, fallen leaf, and twig, with as much care and delicacy as if they had been objects of infinite worth...it was tedious work for the blacks, but they seemed proud of the great consideration in which their services were held...and, as the blacks had conjectured, her dead body was found on the summit of the rock.[448]

Newspaper reports attest to the confidence placed in blacktrackers. One report regarding the disappearance of several boys in bushland which appeared in the *Healesville Guardian* reflects this assurance, noting that 'Constable Terlin, and black trackers from Coranderrk are now out searching for the boys.'[449] The most celebrated story of their prowess involved a group of children lost for nine days in the Mallee, successfully tracked by three Victorian Aboriginal men, King Richard, Jerry or Red-cap, and Fred.[450] It was not just the living whom the blacktrackers were employed to trace but also the dead. The finding of the remains of a lost one brought closure for the parents, family or friends, who otherwise would have cause to 'drink deeply of the cup of sorrow.' Lancelott explained that on the goldfields and elsewhere there was 'always great satisfaction when the remains of the lost are found. Uncertainty is the most calamitous state which the mind can be thrown into. The heart is choked, and there is an unutterable anguish in the pent up and conflicting emotions of hope and fear.'[451] Blacktrackers were called upon often to locate deceased people[452] such as

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[448] Lancelott, Australia as It Is: It's Settlements, Farms and Goldfields. pp.190-1
[449] Cited in Mitchell, Fernshaw the Forgotten Village. p.27
[450] The story of the Duff children became a celebrated tale in Victorian Colonial history. An *Argus* correspondent reported that the discovery of the lost children was 'successful only through the assistance of native trackers.' . For a detailed discussion see: Presland, For God's Sake, Send the Trackers. p.37
[451] Lancelott, Australia as It Is: It's Settlements, Farms and Goldfields. p.191

Thomas McCormick, who died in the bush (believed to have been due to opium addiction) on the Briagolong diggings in the 1890s.[453] In a similar way a 'black woman' was employed by some miners in December 1854 to dive for their mate who had drowned in the Broken River and for victims of a bushfire.[454] Their expertise was brought to bear on many a poignant tragedy such as the disappearance in November 1859 of a Senior-Constable Patrick Moylett, who enroute to inspect a new diggings near Emerald was lost, never to be seen again despite the efforts of search parties guided by a well known blacktracker 'Jemmy'. Jemmy was able to follow Moylett's tracks for many miles, but lost them in a 'wild jungle where they had been obliterated by the scratchings of lyrebirds.'[455] William Thomas noted the invaluableness of three Aboriginal people who successfully tracked the body of a murder victim after being called in by the Victorian Police in March 1867:

> You are aware that I was applied to by Mr. Inspector Nicholson of the Detective Force in our [?] On the Subject of Blacks to track Bullarook forest – to find the Body of a Man supposed to have been Murder'd – I furnished Mr. Nicholson with every information – and recommended 3 Blacks [Poker Tommy – Avoca Tribe, Jacky – Ballarat, Billy – Upper Lodden.] who were acquainted with that part of Victoria – they succeeded in finding the remains – 20£was offered reward by Col Sec^{y} [456]

The role of trackers, as mentioned previously was inextricably linked with police work. Indeed, Victorian Aboriginal trackers were commonly called 'police trackers'[457] or 'Native Constable'[458] long after the Victorian Native Police Corps was

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[452] See: A Longmire, Nine Creeks to Albacutya - a History of the Shire of Dimboola (North Melbourne: Hargreen Publishing Co, 1985). p.28
[453] L Manning, Discovering Briagalong (Briagolong: Manning, 1994). p.23
[454] Woolner, Diary.
[455] HJ Stacpoole, "The Discovery of the Woods Point Goldfield," Victorian Historical Journal 37.1 (1966). p.53
[456] W Thomas, 12 March 1867 in Thomas, Journal.
[457] Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.
[458] See: J Court, Gold, Law and the Moi (Traralgon: Traralgon and District Historical Society, 1975). p.6

officially disbanded in 1853.[459] The distinction between tracking work under the guise of the Native Police Corps and tracking work performed on an as need basis was blurred during the gold rush period by writers, and the authorities.

NATIVE POLICE

The Victorian Native Police Corps has been extensively researched by a number of scholars and writers including Fels,[460] Bridges,[461] Sadlier,[462] O'Callaghan,[463] Haydon,[464] Shelmerdine,[465] and Presland[466] and most recently by an on-line exhibition produced by Public Records Office of Victoria.[467] Cahir has argued that one of the most significant and best documented influences Aboriginal people had on the goldfields was through the role of the Native Police Corps in establishing order on the goldfields.[468] One of the major benefits of the Port Phillip (Victorian) Native Police Corps, having ostensibly begun in 1837, was to have at the government's disposal a policing force superbly equipped at tracking criminals in the bush.[469] Beginning in 1849 this role began to shift with the advent of gold discoveries, toward patrolling the new gold finds, guarding over the sites, providing order and initially enabling the Port

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[459] Shelmerdine contends that special duty Aboriginal troopers were attached to the Mounted patrol after the cessation of the Native Police Corps. See: S Shelmerdine, "The Port Phillip Native Police Corps," Hons, University of Melbourne, 1972. p.20. Historian Denis O'Bryan, wrote that in 1872 'Howitt traveled to Cann River from Bairnsdale in company with an inspector, some troopers and two aborigines to investigate a murder some ten years ago.' See: O'Bryan, Pioneering East Gippsland. p. 31

[460] Fels, Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District, 1837-1853.

[461] Bridges, "The Native Police Corps, Port Phillip District and Victoria, 1837-1853."

[462] J Sadlier, Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer (London: Penguin, 1913).

[463] T O'Callaghan, "Police in Port Phillip and Victoria 1836-1913," Victorian Historical Journal 12.4 (1928).

[464] Haydon, The Trooper Police of Australia.

[465] Shelmerdine, "The Port Phillip Native Police Corps."

[466] Presland, For God's Sake, Send the Trackers.

[467] Public Records Office of Victoria, Tracking the Native Police.

[468] Cahir, "Golden City, Black History: Koorie History in the Context of Eureka."

[469] VPRS, Russell to La Trobe, PROV, Melbourne.. Strutt described them as 'a useful set of men as could be found for special service; particularly tracking in the wild bush carrying dispatches, and they seemed to lend themselves wonderfully to military discipline, and as to their riding and capital seat, you could literally say that man and horse were one.' W Strutt, Off to Australia, NLA, Canberra. pp.63-4

Phillip government to attempt to keep the gold discoveries a secret. Moreover, it was also in this period that they began to take part in public celebrations such as the opening of the new Princes Bridge, perform guard duties at Pentridge Gaol and act as official escort to dignitaries. Later members of the corps acted as the first gold escort. They had to ensure the safe passage of large amounts of gold from the goldfields that were both in the possession of private individuals and the government officials who were paid in gold for license fees. The Native Police were the first police on the goldfields of Ballarat, (arriving on 20 September, 1851) and collected the new goldfield licenses. This new measure (gold licensing) helped to bring in revenue to the new Victorian Government. Stephen Shelmerdine, in his study of the Port Phillip Native Police, considered that by 1851 the Native Police Force was 'operating at its highest level with demands for its services being stimulated by the riot of bushrangers scouring the whole district and the excited fervour of the early goldrush discoveries.'[470] On duty, they accompanied the commissioners on their rounds, and like so much police work their presence alone was important, along with their readiness to intervene in the event of any disorder.[471] Thus it can be seen that the Native Police Corps were briefly at the epicenter of the Victorian gold epoch.

The official start of the gold rush in Victoria is usually given as the announcement of gold discoveries at Buninyong near Ballarat on 8 August 1851. Prior to this, the Native Police were present at a number of locations where gold discoveries had been found. The earliest of these was their stint beginning on 5 February 1849 guarding the gold discoveries at Daisy Hill, an outstation located 10 miles west of Deep Creek (one of the branches of the Loddon River).[472] FA Powlett, the Commissioner of Crown

[470] Shelmerdine, "The Port Phillip Native Police Corps." p.19
[471] Fels, Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District, 1837-1853.p.213.
[472] PROV, Day Book of the Native Police Corps, Narre Warren, VPRS, Melbourne.

Lands for the district, reported that he had left a party of native police at Daisy Hill Station to prevent any unauthorized occupation of Crown Lands in the neighbourhood.[473]

When the major gold finds at Ballarat, Buninyong, Mt Alexander and Bendigo became public knowledge in 1851, the Native Police were the only effective policing unit Superintendent Charles La Trobe had at his disposal to maintain order and represent the government on the goldfields. A fact which miner cum artist, William Strutt, confirmed from his experiences on the Ballarat diggings:

> Met on our way [to Ballarat] a prisoner and a villainous squint-eyed scoundrel he looked, handcuffed and escorted by two well mounted and smart looking black troopers (of whom I have made a drawing), on the road to Melbourne...the useful black troopers were for a time made to escort prisoners to town; these fine fellows were at first the only mounted police; and indeed performed all the police duty at the Ballarat diggings.[474]

Captain Dana, the officer in charge of the Corps, spent three months at the Clunes goldfield, and reported that his troopers picked gold from the ground everywhere they looked. It is understandable that descriptions of the Native Police Corps should figure prominently both in the historical records and histories of gold mining in Victoria[475] as they frequently patrolled the early diggings at Buninyong, Ballarat, the Pyrenees and Mt Alexander. On a map depicting the discovery of Bendigo goldfields, a small reference to the Corps' presence: 'Black Trooper found spec after 13th Dec [1851]'

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[473] PROV, Letter from Commissioner of Crown Lands to La Trobe, VPRS, Melbourne.
[474] Strutt, Off to Australia. p.63
[475] Discussions about the merits or otherwise of the Native Police Corps varied widely. See: Golding, ed., The Emigrant's Guide to Australia in the Eighteen Fifties. p.116; M Townsend, The Story of Clunes (KIngston: Townsend, 1985). p.35.; Clark and Cahir, "Aboriginal People, Gold and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria." pp.8-9. Also see: Cahir and Clark, "'Why Should We Pay Money to the Queen?' the Aboriginal Side of Eureka."

demonstrates that they too were caught up in the gold fever.[476] Incidents involving the Corps and miners who resented the licensing fee certainly contributed to their prominence on the central Victorian goldfields. An incident on the Ballarat goldfields on 21 September 1851 illustrates both their success as a force prepared to intervene in case of disorder and their growing unpopularity in the eyes of miners. Commissioner Doveton and his assistant David Armstrong explained to the diggers the government's decision to introduce licensing fees, which attracted an angry response from the crowd. A public meeting was convened on the spot. The first miners who applied to pay the fee were struck and pelted by "the mob", as Dana referred to them. Had it not been for the presence of the Native Police, Dana reported, "those diggers would have been seriously injured".[477] Cannon posits that the overbearing methods of the Native Police "so antagonized the diggers that a flame of rebellion was lit, culminating in the Eureka Stockade three years later."[478] The Native Police Corps Day book also demonstrates that in September and October 1852, members of the Native Police were still active, and were accompanying Dana to the diggings at Deep Creek.[479] George Sutherland, a miner at the then new goldfield of Ballarat considered them a potent force.

> The Commissioners, Armstrong and Doveton, arrived, and built a small hut on the top of the hill opposite Golden Point. There was also a police officer, named Captain Dana, accompanied by a number of black troopers, ready to support the authority of the commissioners. Going around the ground, they inquisitively looked into each of the claims which were being worked by the industrious diggers.[480]

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[476] Map Depicting the Discovery of Bendigo Goldfields, (Melbourne: SLV, 1851).
[477] VPRS, Colonial Secretary Inward Correspondence, PROV, Melbourne.Dana described general dissatisfaction with licensing system and meeting held by miners calling for a boycott of fee payment. Trooper's presence prevents injury to those volunteering to pay, who are pelted by mob with stones. Request is also made for recall of Native Police stationed at Goulburn be redeployed to Ballarat.
[478] M Cannon, Black Land, White Land (Port Melbourne: Minerva, 1993). p.239
[479] PROV, Day Book of the Native Police Corps, Narre Warren.
[480] Sutherland, Tales of the Goldfields. p.43

Many miners noted their presence on the goldfields as conspicuous and adding a touch of exotica to the Ballarat scene such as the following extract from the *Illustrated Australian Magazine* of 1852.

> His [The Commissioner's] tent has the mounted police on one side, and the Native Police, in an extensive mia mia, on the other. The blackfellows are busy tailoring, and here is one on the broad of his back in the sun feigning sleep; and incessantly chattering some monotonous chant...Close by the Commissioner's tent you observe the encampment of the native police. They too are enjoying the exhilaration of the moment. How graceful are their agile movements. Yonder black fellow is making a feigned attack on his brother with a frying pan; his brother is about to shoot him with his knife. What admirable attributes in both! What dexterous dodging! Frolic is universal among them.[481]

William Brownhill, who found gold at Brown Hill (Ballarat) in 1851, told of how he was caught without a license, taken to the commissioner's camp, and "guarded by eight or nine black troopers, who in their uniform and polished boots, looked as proud as possible".[482] In his painting depicting the goldfields of 'Ballarat in October 1851', James Cook Smith, depicted the mounted Native Troopers prominently as did fellow artist William Strutt.[483] One unidentified digger described the 'bustling and picturesque scene' at Mount Alexander in December 1851 when gold to the amount of 25,000 pounds was got ready to be transported to Melbourne.

> The cavalcade consisted of two mounted troopers ahead, then the chaise cart, driven by a officer with an armed guard beside him, and six more troopers on horseback behind, four of them, I think, of the native black police...on a rising ground the commissioner's establishment is placed, consisting of several tents and two or three gunyahs, or bark huts, made by the native police, after their own fashion. The trooper's horses were standing about ready saddled, and the

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[481] Unknown, Ballarat, Illustrated Australian Magazine, vol. 3-4 (Melbourne: Ham Brothers, 1852). pp.262-4. A very similar description is contained in "A tandem drive from Melbourne to Ballarat" differing only by adding that 'The native police, lithe and graceful as kangaroo dogs...a painter might study their attributes'. See: The Religous Tract Society, Australia and Its Settlements. p.22

[482] Fels, Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District, 1837-1853. p.212.

[483] JC Smith, Ballarat in October 1851, Ballarat.

> men themselves, both black and white, and in various costumes, gave life to the picture, while of course some interest was added by the knowledge of the valuable load carried in the cart.[484]

Most miners however were less enamored by their appearance on the goldfields. George Dunderdale, a miner at Bendigo 'merely glared at them, and let them pass in silence. They were sleek and clean, and we were gaunt as wolves',[485] whilst John Chandler opined that 'They looked enough to frighten anyone; their black faces, big white eyes, long moustache, long swords, carbines, and a pair of pistols in their holsters, was a caution to timid people.'[486] The presence of Aboriginal policemen was condemned by some miners who were already angered with the expensive license system and the overbearing methods rumored to be used by Dana and some officials including troopers firing upon diggers.[487] Further fuel was added to the hatred towards Dana and the Native Police following an incident reported in *The Argus* (1/10/1851):

> "The redoubtable Captain Dana diversified his exploits on Saturday by knocking down a young man named Thomas with the butt of his whip; the young man fell into a pit from the effect of the blow. It is gratifying to record such a gallant military exploit – a repetition of the like of which will render it a matter of necessity to place him under the surveillance of his own satanic battalion of Black Guards – a suitable troop for such a commander."[488]

Attitudes towards the Corps differed widely[489] as evidenced by various letters to the *Argus* indicate. One correspondent lampooned the idea of 'blackfellows' guarding the

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[484] G Mackaness, ed., Murray's Guide to the Gold Diggings: The Australian Gold Diggings, vol. 8 (Sydney: D.S. Ford, 1956). pp.41-2

[485] Dunderdale, The Book of the Bush. p.93

[486] Cannon, ed., Forty Years in the Wilderness. pp.28&45

[487] "The conduct of Captain Dana...at the Diggings continues to be commented on by every individual who comes to Geelong and nothing short of the appointment of a more fitting man in his place there will give satisfaction". *Geelong Advertiser*, *Argus* 29 September 1851.

[488] *Argus* 1 October 1851.

[489] MD Mereweather considered the 'black police to make most excellent mounted police, although it is necessary to restrain their ferocity towards delinquents of their own people.' Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. p.202

gold from Ballarat claiming: 'What benefit is it to the diggers to have an escort such as this? One blackfellow leading a horse to which 70 pounds weight of gold is strapped, and two white troopers behind him. A couple of men with double barreled guns might take the gold, blackfellow and horse to boot.'[490] Yet a letter to the *Argus* editor on 26 November 1851 from an impassioned gentleman by the name of "Bucknalook" defended the Corps efficiency and deplored the crass miserliness of the colonial government towards them.

> A great deal has been said about Christianity and civilizing, this is all talk, talk! Talk of equality of rights!...The ambiguous captain of this very warlike regiment, it will be seen, figures with 300 pounds [per year] attached to his name...whilst the efficient part of the company, namely the natives themselves have (Oh! Whisper it not in the same breath with the word justice, mercy, Christianity or equality or rights! THREE PENCE PER DAY!! Many of these blacks have as correct an idea of the component parts of a shilling, that it is composed of 12 pence as their redoubtable captain, and what must their impression be of this gross act of injustice...[491]

Bucknalook's dire projection proved to be accurate, as by early 1852 Dana was finding it difficult to prevent the Aboriginal troopers from 'absconding', and had trouble attracting new members. 'I can only account for [this]', Dana writes, 'from the facility they now have of making money, by working for the Settlers, and also from their frequenting the Gold Workings'.[492] An example of this was the sudden desertion of four troopers at Buninyong in October 1851.[493] In December 1851 the Victorian Legislative Council conducted a decisive meeting where the function and future prospects of the Corps were discussed. There were calls for its cessation as it was argued that they were 'utterly useless', whilst others argued it was 'absurd to employ

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[490] Cited in P McCarthy Sullivan, ed., A Toast to the Days of Gold. p.46
[491] Bucknalook, *Argus* 26 November 1851.
[492] PROV, VPRS 1189 Colonial Secretary's office: Inward registered Correspondence 1851-1863, unit 16, item 52/1510. Quoted in Stone, "Researching Native Police Records at Prov."
[493] By leaving behind all their gear and equipment, Fels argues, the troopers were clearly signaling their desire to leave the Corps VPRS, Colonial Secretary's Office: Correspondence, PROV, Melbourne.

constables whose evidence could not be heard in courts of justice'. However, the continuation of the Corps was secured by the support of both the Colonial Secretary and the Attorney General whose praxis was effectively 'if it isn't broken don't fix it'

> The Committee's erudite attention was directed to the impressive facts that no cases of improper conduct by the Native Police in executing a warrant had ever been reported and that in carrying out normal duties they were as reliable as white men...In conclusion the Attorney general put forward a thoroughly Australian reason for their continuation – there was no decisive reason for their disbandment at the present stage after so many years in existence.[494]

By February 1852 however Dana had secured the support of La Trobe to radically reform the Native Police Corps. The most important of these reforms was the decision to reduce the number of native troopers, increase the number of non-Indigenous troopers and recruit only native troopers from areas outside Melbourne or Geelong.[495] Dana was also successful in securing La Trobe's support for the Native troopers to be used for tracking and escorting rather than policing. In Dana's view the need to include Aboriginal troopers as troopers had diminished as conflict between Aboriginal people and non-Indigenes had effectually ceased. By October 1852 the Victorian Native Police Corps had finished conducting active duties in the field.[496]

Why did both Dana and La Trobe, who were both long term advocates of the Native Police Corps, not see a continuing role for Aboriginal troopers? Possibly they foresaw their role as a kind of elite force, specialists in tracking, escorting and guiding. Yet there is no compelling evidence in the correspondence between Dana and La Trobe to

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[494] "Meeting," *Argus* December 5 1851.

[495] VPRS, Colonial Secretary's Office: Correspondence, PROV, Melbourne. Correspondence between Dana and La Trobe between July-December 1852 regarding transformation of Native Police Force and emphasis on tracking and escorting rather than policing.

[496] Their role in policing the sale of illicit alcohol was observed in both artwork and newspapers such as the *Evelyn Observer* which reported 'I was unexpectedly set upon by a number of blackfellows, who began seizing the kegs, believing that they contained liquor.' 'Reminiscences 17 August 1888' cited in A Ross, Reminiscences of Andrew Ross (Eltham: Kangaroo Ground, 1995). p.10

suggest this other than a recommendation to the effect that they could be utilized in that guise. La Trobe made no notes in the margins or gave clear directives for Dana to pursue this course. Eventually just such a specialist corps was established, of Aboriginal trackers attached to the Victorian Police force, but it consisted entirely of Queensland Aboriginal people (Murris). Ironically, recruiting parties for the Queensland Native Police were actively enlisting Victorian Aboriginal people in 1849 and again in 1864.[497] Arguably the reason why a similar corps of Victorian Aboriginal trackers was not established was simply due to monetary restraint. Whilst the Victorian Police, formed in January 1853, utilized the services of Victorian Aboriginal trackers on numerous occasions to great effect after the disbanding of the Native Police Corps, it was obviously judged not necessary to have Aboriginal people on the payroll and simpler to place the responsibility of acquiring a tracker in the hands of the local constabulary.

Presland has identified how on a number of occasions Victorian Aboriginal people (Kooris) continued to play a role in policing, in matters relating to Aboriginal offenders, bushrangers, tracking lost children (and Victorian Police officers) and tracking lost or stolen horses.[498] Two instances in the Ballarat district are illustrative of the use made of Aboriginal (Wathawurrung) people in policing matters. On Christmas Eve 1866, Senior Constable James Mansfield from the Black Hills station near Ballarat was one of a party of searchers which included three trackers. One of the trackers, named Heath, had been leading the group down a slope when they came

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[497] A correspondent at Echuca noted: An Aboriginal recruiting party is now on the Murray, enlisting for the Queensland native police...About fifteen years ago [the Queensland native police force recruiting agent] succeeded in inducing a large number [approx. 15] of youths to join...On Monday they enlisted two youths- Dick of Echica, and Johnny, of Moira...It is thought they will get 100 men'. Riverine Herald, *Argus* 24 September 1864.

[498] In 1870 a Koori named Willie Buskin had been working as a tracker in the Kilmore district. At the same time a young Aboriginal man named David was assisting police by tracking the bushranger Harry Power in the Benalla district. See: Presland, For God's Sake, Send the Trackers. pp.42-3

upon a recently fallen tree against which a fire had been set. Raking over the remains they were recovered some tell-tale pieces of evidence which resulted in a conviction, and subsequent hanging of the accused.[499] In 1867, Jemmy (or Jimmy) Millar (Djabwurrung name: Colit) and Davy Smith, a Tooloora Balug (Buninyong area) clansman of the Wathawurrung tribe were called in to assist police stationed at Rokewood and Buninyong in their enquiries regarding the murder of Thomas Ulrick on the Woady Yaloak goldfields. The two Aboriginal trackers, Millar and Smith, proved to be instrumental in the convictions, leading the police to the guns used in the murder and also tracking the culprit's horse's movements.[500] Instances of help from Aboriginal trackers and guides for gold escorts and in the pursuit of bushrangers, horse thieves, cattle rustlers,[501] missing miners[502] and murderers[503] on the goldfields were also prolific on the Gippsland goldfields. Frank Shellard, a miner on the Omeo goldfields described how a gold escort made up of a trooper and a 'blackfellow to act as guide' was ambushed on the Tongio track. One of the gold escort party (Mr. Green) was murdered by two assailants. The unidentified Aboriginal guide 'hurried after the lady [a member of the escort party] and guided her to the station for she was already bushed and in great distress, he then told all he had seen and the men's names as he knew them quite well.' The Aboriginal guide then assisted the police by conducting them to the spot where the body was concealed, and was probably one of a

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[499] *Ballarat Star* 16-18 February 1867.

[500] For further discussion see: L Moore, Shot for Gold; the Murder of Thomas Ulrick Burke on the Woady Yalloak Goldfield (Daylesford: Jim Crow Press, 2002).pp.23-6 Sadly, neither of the Aboriginal trackers shared in the Police Reward Fund (over 100 pounds) in acknowledgement of services rendered in the prosecution and conviction of the two murderers.

[501] Shellard wrote about Police with the aid of a black tracker 'soon got on the trail 'of 'Jack Wells', who was actively horse and cattle rustling throughout the region. See: Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.

[502] Shellard reported that the 'police had a black tracker' to assist them in the 'Back Creek Mystery' case, whereby two miners had disappeared. See: Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.

[503] Shellard noted that after an accused digger was sent up to Melbourne for trial 'A Trooper with Black Tracker were sent up to Omeo to collect evidence.' See: Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.

number of 'blacks' recruited by the police who soon proved to be invaluable in tracking and leading the police on the trail of the murderers.

> The trackers soon picked up the trail it appeared to go up the track leading to the Mitta Mitta River...The trackers followed the trail like bloodhounds over rocks and dead timber that made it almost impossible to travel the police bringing up the rear.[504]

Shellard effusively extolled the virtues of the Aboriginal trackers who had played pivotal roles in the capture of both the suspects.

> The trackers had tracked their men over 30 miles of very rough country in two days which was a wonderful record considering the difficulties they had to encounter as the prisoners were good bushmen and did everything they could to obliterate their tracks.[505]

It was obvious to some members of the Victorian Police Force[506] that it would be of inestimable benefit to employ the tracker[s], described by Shellard, on a permanent basis. In March 1859 Henry Hill, an Inspector at Livingstone Creek Police Station in the Omeo district of Gippsland, wrote to his superiors strongly imploring them to consider the overwhelming benefits that the outstanding services of Aboriginal trackers could accrue to isolated police stations on the Gippsland goldfields.

> I have the honour to inform you that on several recent occasions I have seen the urgent necessity of having an intelligent Aboriginal native permanently attached to the police establishment in this district. When in pursuit of the murderers of the late Mr. Green one accompanied us and was mainly instrumental in their capture having tracked them nearly sixty miles to the spot where they were overtaken. At the moment I am prevented from want of one from searching for the man 'Simpson' lost from Gibbo's Creek. His services would also be frequently made use of for tracing stolen horses etc. For lack of such a guide I

[504] Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.
[505] Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.
[506] In August 1869 Francis Hare, Superintendent of the Bourke Police District wrote to his superiors proposing that Victorian Aboriginal people be permanently employed by the Force and used for tracking purposes. See: Presland, For God's Sake, Send the Trackers. p.41-2

> am constantly obliged to call upon civilians here to assist us, frequently having to put myself under obligation to persons I should otherwise hold no communication with, and having to divulge my plan of operations where it should be kept secret.[507]

By the 1870s it was believed that most Victorian Aboriginal 'full bloods' were not fit enough, had not retained their tracking skills, and ironically had become too 'civilised' to be useful as trackers for police work. Inspector Hill, however, in his correspondence also revealed that a lack of trust in local Aboriginal people thinking it 'inadvisable to employ anyone from the local tribe as he could not be depended upon at all times' was probably the principal reason why Queensland Aboriginal trackers, and not their Victorian counterparts, were to be formed into a permanent contingent of the Victorian Police Force.[508]

Consequently the occasional recruitment of Murris who had either arrived in Victoria with droving parties or were directly recruited from contacts in Queensland became more frequent. Presland argues convincingly that the hunt for the Kelly gang in 1878 was a turning point in Aboriginal-Victorian Police employment relations that would last until the 1960s.

> There was a significant difference in the way in which the Kelly hunt was handled. In all cases where trackers had been called on prior to 1878, the department had availed itself of local Koori men, who were hired on a short term basis for the purpose in hand. That essentially ad hoc response to investigations was changed forever with the hunt for the Kelly Gang.[509]

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[507] Quoted from Presland, For God's Sake, Send the Trackers. p.40

[508] Shellard argued that a number of Aboriginal people were members of gangs, that the 'Native camps' were the bases for some bushrangers, and at the very least many Aboriginal people refused to give up information about known identities operating cattle rustling activities in the region. This was probably generally known information that led to Hill's request for outsider Aboriginal people. See: Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.

[509] Presland, For God's Sake, Send the Trackers.

This chapter has demonstrated that just as Victorian Colonial Governments understood the inherent value of employing Aboriginal people as a police force and later as official trackers, so too did non-Indigenous miners clearly perceive the enormous benefits of hiring Aboriginal trackers for a wide gamut of reasons. The tracking of criminals, lost people and stock was a very highly skilled occupation which unlike any other was perceived as the preserve of Aboriginal people, and rarely, if ever, emulated by non-Indigenous people. Hence our historical knowledge of their exploits in this field has been well documented yet, perplexingly they are rarely accorded in regional or generalist gold histories the significance that was bestowed upon them during the gold rush period, and remain, to a large degree, outside special exhibitions or publications, as invisible actors on the gold stage. Tracking and police work in particular were two complementary roles that Aboriginal people performed on the goldfields which involved a great deal of hierarchical employer-employee relationship with non-Indigenous authorities which earnt them a great deal of respect. There were many other occupations which Aboriginal people performed on the goldfields, which is a theme taken up in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: TRADE, COMMERCE AND THE SERVICE SECTOR

The social constructions of Aboriginal people as workers, Broome argues, have often been ones which represented them as poor or indifferent workers.[510] A suite of writers have done considerable research about northern frontiers and have remedied these erroneous perceptions and documented the significance of Aboriginal pastoral workers in northern Australia.[511] However, in Victoria only a handful of scholars have examined the extent and significance of Victorian Aboriginal people as a labour force in the nineteenth century and these have concentrated primarily on Aboriginal peoples' entry into the frontier economy of the 1830-40s.[512] Several micro race-labour histories of highly visible occupations filled by Aboriginal people such as police and trackers have made important contributions to our deeper understanding of labour history in nineteenth century Victoria.[513] This chapter however aims to contribute to research on Aboriginal entrepreneurship during the gold rush period and other less 'visible' yet instrumental occupations performed by Aboriginal people on and around the goldfields, and sets out to provide what Reynolds described as a 'powerful riposte to the generalist historiography' which has relegated Aboriginal work, trade and commerce during the gold rush period to a 'desultory footnote'.

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[510] Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern frontiers."
[511] Jebb, Blood Sweat and Welfare, Stevens, Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry, McGrath, 'Born in the Cattle': Aborigines in Cattle Country, Brock, "Pastoral Stations and Reserves in South and Central Australia, 1850s-1950s.", May, From Bush to Station: Aboriginal Labour in the North Queensland Pastoral Industry 1861-1897, Reynolds, With the White People: The Crucial Role of Aborigines in the Exploration and Development of Australia, Reynolds, Black Pioneers, Smith, "Station Camps: Legislation, Labour Relations and Rations on Pastoral Leases in the Kimberley Region, Western Australia."
[512] Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers.", McGrath and Saunders, "Aboriginal Workers."
[513] See previous chapter on 'Trackers and Native Police' for references to these studies.

Aboriginal expertise at bark cutters (for building huts and water races) was renowned amongst miners. This type of commercial activity was a specialist activity in both their traditional economy and their already established involvement in the pastoral industry.[514] Some idea of how proficient and profitable the bark cutting trade was for Aboriginal people can be gleaned from the correspondence by the Bishop of Sydney, returning from a visit to the diggings around the Ophir region (NSW)[515] in June 1851. The Bishop reported on the relative affluence of Aboriginal bark cutters compared to the white miners:

> Native blacks straggled in from the hills with their gins and picaninnies and received good pay for fetching firewood as well as bark for hut roofs. "Black fellow rich now" they said as they smoked cigars which many diggers could not afford. Riders gave the blackfellows their mounts to herd "Three shillin and tix pences, mind it horse," was the regular price. Troops of near-naked aborigines from the far outback trudged to look in wonder, display their skill throwing mulga boomerangs, stamp out their rhythmic corroborees, and beg gratuities.[516]

The struggle for miners to earn enough to sustain themselves was often keenly felt on the Victorian goldfields as well. Gold seeking often yielded inconsistent and poor returns as attested by James Nisbet's 'Letters from a disappointed gold digger', published in the London *Daily News* (May 1853). Nisbet, relating his experiences of encountering Aboriginal people (presumably Wathawurrung) at Ballarat, did not note them as mining, but (as in the Ophir region) noted their presence on the goldfields earning some money from gold diggers: 'met a party of half a dozen at Ballarat' and were sometimes 'employed by the diggers in remote gullies to strip trees of their bark

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[514] See Banfield, Like the Ark: The Story of Ararat. p.63. The *Argus* reported an unidentified Aboriginal person had worked on the Ballarat-Ararat railway line. Beaufort Chronicle, *Argus* 25 March 1873. p.6

[515] An "Australian Journalist" at the Ophir diggings in 1851 reported nine Aboriginal men being paid a shilling and food for their role as carriers for some miners. See: Keesing, ed., History of the Australian Gold Rushes. pp. 114-5

[516] Monaghan, Australians and the Gold Rush. p.178

for a hut, for a day's labor at which a little bread or a English shilling is sufficient recompense.'[517] Similarly, Ned Peters' party at Dunolly employed some (presumably) Djadjawurrung to get 'some dozen sheets of bark for us' and who expressed their surprise at how many sheets the miners required, stating "What for you so much like 'um hay? Piccaninnie wheelbarrow no good long with big one bark!"[518] John Briggs, a Tasmanian Aboriginal attracted to the gold diggings with his wife Louisa[519] like most gold diggers turned his back on gold digging, became an employee at Eurrambeen Station as he found it more profitable doing bush work such as cutting bark at 6d a sheet.[520] Miner, James Smith, acknowledged Aboriginal peoples' greater skill at the task of cutting bark and thus rationalized the utility of Aboriginal people on the goldfields: 'We repaired the race and set two aborigines to work to cut bark for us, they being so much more ready at it than Europeans.'[521] At the Mt Alexander diggings a miner found the work of making a hut more efficient with the aid of an unidentified Aboriginal person, noting that they 'set to work, dug holes, cut down trees, stripped some bark off others in which, by-the-by, a black fellow helped us, and by night had our tent pretty well secured.'[522] William Thomas, Guardian of Aborigines, also reported that Aboriginal people were 'industrious and profitably employed' in cutting bark and in 1861 wrote at length about Aboriginal businessmen and women brokering contracts and submitting tenders especially within the

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[517] Nisbet, Articles.

[518] Blake, ed., A Gold Digger's Diaries by Ned Peters. p.108. Joseph Jenkins, like many miners wrote of hunting possums, adding they are 'principally killed for the value of their skins which are made into rugs and cloaks...which are in great demand in Europe. Thirty two of their skins make a rug which is sold for 2 pounds. It also makes a light and warm coat for the swagman.' Evans, ed., Diary of a Welsh Swagman, 1869-1898. pp.34-7

[519] D Barwick, "This Most Remarkable Lady," Metaphors of Interpretation, eds. Diane Barwick, Jeremy Beckett and M Reay (Canberra: ANU, 1985), Barwick and Barwick, eds., Rebellion at Coranderrk.

[520] M Oulton, A Valley of the Finest Description - a History of the Shire of Lexton (Maryborough: Australian Print Group, 1995). p.187

[521] Cuffley, ed., Send the Boy to Sea: The Memoirs of a Sailor on the Goldfields by James Montagu Smith. p.72

[522] Mackaness, ed., Murray's Guide to the Gold Diggings: The Australian Gold Diggings. p.41

expansive building industry heavily dependent on bark.[523] References in diaries and journals of pastoralists about the employment of Aboriginal barkstrippers are brief but common.[524] In the Loddon district EH Alfrey's ledger is typical, showing payments to the "Blackfellows" in September 1863 and for several years thereafter.[525] Also common during the pastoral period and into the gold period was the employment of Aboriginal people as 'domestics'.

DOMESTICS

As Clark and Barwick[526] have identified, many Victorian Aboriginal people throughout the nineteenth century continued to choose to remain in their own country, stating quite categorically their desire to remain in the localities of their birth or their adopted country. In the midst of the intense labour shortages experienced in towns and cities precipitated by the alluvial gold rushes, Aboriginal peoples' cultural trait to not wander from their occupations and home estates ensured the desirability of Aboriginal labour. Scenes in Melbourne of acute labour shortages drove the cost of common goods, services and wages to dizzying heights. One writer declared 'I cannot get a pair of boots made or mended in Melbourne if I were to give any money that might be asked.' Aboriginal people too, it was noted, enjoyed or exploited the law of demand and supply: 'I cannot at any price get a man to chop my wood, and I think myself fortunate if I can prevail on the black gins (natives) to work for half an

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[523] William Thomas half yearly report, from 30 June to 31 December 1852 in Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address. Also see W Thomas in Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.17

[524] See:S Priestley`, Warracknabeal- a Wimmera Centenary (Jacaranda Press, 1962). p.59.Banfield, Green Pastures and Gold - a History of Ararat. p.33; H Anderson, The Flowers of the Field - a History of Ripon Shire (Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1969).

[525] Fernihurst District History Committee, Reflections from the Kinypaniel. p.15

[526] Barwick and Barwick, eds., Rebellion at Coranderrk, Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria.

hour.'[527] The employment of Aboriginal people as domestics or servants was commonly stated but briefly noted, predominately off the goldfields. [528] In Geelong, one correspondent wailed about all his servants leaving for the goldfields except 'a native black [Wathawurrung] to cook, and a native boy to wait at table & c...one flock of 5,000 sheep under charge of a native black.'[529] Charles Panton recalled that during his stay at Mangalore he obtained the services of several Aboriginal people multi-tasking as guides, shepherds and rouseabouts and had also employed the 'chief as butler and his wife as char'.[530] Other non-Indigenous people availed themselves of Aboriginal labour as well such as Mrs. Annie Fraser, who for some years from 1869, living at Nine Mile Hut on the Loddon, spoke of Aboriginal women assisting her to draw water from the Loddon for domestic use, and Katherine McK recalled that at Bolwarrah Station her mother 'sometimes obtained the help of a young lubra in the work of the household'.[531] The relationships forged between non-Indigenous women such as Annie Fraser and Aboriginal women were often vividly recounted as being warm and memorable.[532] Pastoralists in the Charlton district recalled that 'the lubras had kind hearts and helped the station women with housework and the children.'[533]

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[527] Prout, An Illustrated Handbook of the Voyage to Australia. p.59

[528] A correspondent in the *Argus* reported that 'A son of the late King [Billy Anderson], a smart intelligent youth, is living as hired servant with Mr. Jas. Jones of Seymour' in Kilmore Examiner, "Kilmore: The Aborigines," *Argus* 19 October 1863.. Also in the *Argus* is the report of 'Timbo', an Aboriginal servant in Gippsland. See: . Also a report of an unidentified Aboriginal cleaning woman in Pastoral Times, "Surprising the Natives," *Argus* 14 November 1862. Also see numerous reports of Aboriginal people being employed as domestics in Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament.

[529] Prout, An Illustrated Handbook of the Voyage to Australia. p.59

[530] Panton, The Autobiography of J.A Panton. p.40

[531] McK, Old Days and Gold Days. p.20

[532] Fernihurst District History Committee, Reflections from the Kinypaniel. p.15. Desmond Martin in his 1981 history of Albury-Wodonga published excerpts of the reminiscences of Mrs James [Mary] Wheeler, who referred to the Aboriginal people in the region as 'Tallangatta blacks' and considered them 'very kind and lovable, especially the gins'. D Martin, A Tale of Twin Cities (Armidale: Graphic, 1981).pp.50-1. Mrs Miller of Yea shifted to Alexandra with her friend 'Peggy', an Aboriginal woman she had befriended and looked after. Cited in H Blanks, The Story of Yea (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1973). p.72

[533] Cited in G Cadzow and N Wright, Charlton in the Vale of the Avoca (Charlton: Charlton Bi-Centenary Committee, 1988). p.3

Sue Wesson, has identified two Gippsland Aboriginal sisters from the Metung region, Elizabeth Thorpe and Emma Booth, who went to the goldfields, probably at Delegate, where they worked as cooks and laundry workers. It is highly probable that this was a scenario often played out on the goldfields as it had been in the pastoral era.[534] After the alluvial gold rush period there is also evidence that a number of Aboriginal women were employed as domestics.[535] In 1873, John Green, in correspondence to the Board for the Protection of Aborigines reported that two unidentified Aboriginal women were working for Mr. C Reid at Reidsdale 'One of them is nurse in Mr. Reid's family, the other does all Mrs. Reid's washing.'[536]

BABY SITTING

A feature of Victorian Aboriginal culture was the 'molly coddling' of their children.[537] This attentiveness towards babies was also reported being directed towards non-Indigenous children.[538] The loneliness and isolation of non-Indigenous women on the goldfields was at times crippling, at times only obviated by the presence of Aboriginal women. The isolation of non-Indigenous women on the goldfields is exemplified by an observation made by one miner on the Omeo goldfields who noted: 'Tom Shehan had a young wife and child, she was the only

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[534] Wesson, "The Aborigines of Eastern Victoria and Far South-Eastern New South Wales, 1830-1910: An Historical Geography." p.186

[535] Historian Kathleen Gannan discerned from newspaper reports and journals that Aboriginal people were predominately employed {as 'odd job boys, housemaids, guides and stock hands' in the Swan Hill region. See: K Gannan, "A Patriarch of Old," Melbourne University, 1970.. At an inquest held in March 1865 Caroline Malcolm testified that she had been a 'servant for several years, washing at the houses of squatters...She had lived at the Marong Hotel as a servant for two years. She often did washing for Europeans at their houses to earn the price of some tea and sugar and other comforts for her mother and father.' Cited in Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria. p.148

[536] J Green (1873) cited in: Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. pp.6-7

[537] See: Victorian Government, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines.; Together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices.

[538] Katherine Kirkland recorded the Wathawurrung's adoring attitudes towards her infant daughter in the pastoral period. See: K Kirkland, Life in the Bush by a Lady (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1845).

white woman among hundreds of diggers and aboriginals'.[539] An oral account of Wathawurrung people taking care of the Eureka rebels' children at Black Hill in 1854 whilst the events at the Ballarat stockade occurred[540] have not been verified but there was certainly a precedent of such an activity by Aboriginal people on and off the goldfields. At the Dunolly goldfield, Charles and Sarah Belcher were the recipients of visits from Djadjawurrung people who gave much attention to the Belcher baby. When Charles Belcher went to Castlemaine for supplies, these Djadjawurrung people took care of Sarah Belcher, cutting wood and bringing water.[541] Similarly, an Aboriginal couple, Jimmy and Sally, in the Mitta Mitta district were known to 'be very fond of white children and often nursed Lucy Greaves [born 1862] when she was a little girl.'[542] The Martin family too was very fortunate in having enjoyed baby-sitting of their children from the Wergaia and the Wathawurrung / Djabwurrung.

> Mr. Martin was in business distributing groceries and he was away from home [Nhill] when his daughter was born. The Aboriginal women befriended Mrs. Martin and were very helpful at the time of the birth [March 1866]. They were particularly taken with the white baby and were very attentive towards her. Soon after Elizabeth was born the Martin family took up land at Lexton between the Langi Kal Kal Road and the main road to Springs. There was an Aboriginal camp near the Toll Gate and one day Mrs. Martin discovered that Elizabeth was missing. A search was begun and some time later Elizabeth was found safe and well in the Aboriginal camp sucking a possum bone.[543]

Such intimate encounters between families, though probably infrequent, would inevitably involve cross-cultural dialogues that were very significant for those mining families. Some babysitting would have been done on a more business-styled footing, a fact intimated by Emily Skinner who had an 'opportunity of seeing them and talking

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[539] Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.
[540] A Begg-Sunter, "Aboriginal Child Minders and Eureka," (Ballarat: Personal Correspondence, 2003).
[541] Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings. p.8
[542] Colquhuon, Mitta Mitta from the Early Pioneer Days. p.10
[543] Oulton, A Valley of the Finest Description - a History of the Shire of Lexton. p.36

to some of the poor women "lubras" with their little piccanninies fastened on their backs' at Longwood in central Victoria. Skinner noted that Aboriginal women were 'living in the capacity of servants, and, I was told, made very good ones, being especially kind to children.'[544] Other family reminiscences also recall the warm solace received by non-Indigenous women from Aboriginal people. James McCann recounted how 'one old [Wathawurrung] lubra used to nurse me when I was a little fellow.'[545] Solitary references such as 'many times Mrs. Baxter was left with only the blacks and her young family'[546] may belie an intricate dependency some mining families, especially women separated from their miner husbands, forged with Aboriginal people.[547]

FARMING

During the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate period (1838-1850), a protectorate station had been established on Djadjawurrung land near Mt Franklin in central Victoria. In 1855, demand for farming land led to a subdivision and sale of much of the Aboriginal reserve. Only 640 acres close to Mt Franklin were reserved for use by four Djadjawurrung families who wished to 'cultivate and sow the land which is indeed their own'.[548] ES Parker, former Assistant Protector of the Aborigines, reported to a Government Select Committee in 1858 about the Aboriginal farmers: 'They hold twenty-one acres of land co-jointly...on their own account...They have erected decent residences for themselves; have cultivated the soil; have taken several

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[544] Duyker, ed., A Woman on the Goldfields: Recollections of Emily Skinner, 1854-1878.
[545] J McCann, "Some Notes on Early Geelong," Victorian Historical Magzine 6.4 (1917). p.191
[546] L Moorhead, Mornington: In the Wake of Flinders (Mornington: Mornington Shire, 1971).p.35
[547] The Melbourne *Herald* (1917) published a story which revealed that in the inner suburbs of Melbourne too, such as Richmond, non-Indigenous women were living very closely as neighbours with local clans who had traditional camps next door. Cited in Co Richmond, Copping It Sweet: Shared Memories of Richmond (Burwood: City of Richmond, 1988). pp.18-19
[548] Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.6

crops [since 1852]'.[549] Many miners and travelers passing through to the nearby diggings acknowledged that the Djadjawurrung farmers had moved quickly to grasp the economic opportunities and capitalized on the nearby goldfields by 'cultivating and selling produce' to miners at the local diggings.[550] Some observers thought it notable that these Aboriginal farmers were 'in no respect different from ordinary European peasants in the habits and associations of their lives.'[551] Illness, the accidental deaths of several of the Djadjawurrung farmers, encroaching non-Indigenous farmers, theft of stock by non-Indigenous miners and lack of land tenure security afforded by the Government all spelled an end to the Djadjawurrung initiative.[552]

POSSUM SKIN RUGS AND ARTIFACTS

Similarly, the Aboriginal skills of possum skin rug making were readily employed by miners. Whilst many 'diggers were very fond' of hunting possums and 'making beautiful rugs of them, by sewing their skins together,'[553] miners and others more commonly accepted that Aboriginal people were more adept at the trade and thus engaged in what Edward Tame described as a 'good item of commerce'.[554] AB Pierce

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[549] Victorian Government, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines,; Together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices. p.19

[550] See: Cannon, ed., Forty Years in the Wilderness, Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold, Martin, Early History of Newstead District, McK, Old Days and Gold Days, Middleton, A Description of the Life and Times in Victoria in the 1860's by a Young Colonist.

[551] W Westgarth, Victoria and the Australian Gold Mines in 1857 (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1857). pp.222-224

[552] For further discussion see: D Rhodes, An Historical and Archeological Investigation of the Loddon Aboriginal Protectorate Station and Mount Franklin Aboriginal Reserve (Melbourne: VAS, 1995).

[553] Campbell, Rough and Smooth or Ho! For an Australian Goldfield, Evans, ed., Diary of a Welsh Swagman, 1869-1898. p.35-37.; Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.Sinclair noted a number of non-Indigenous workers wearing hats manufactured from possum skins, a tradition that continued from the pastoral period. See: Sinclair, Memoirs.Mereweather observed on the roof of huts to dry were 'opossum skins, of which people here make rugs to keep warm.' See: Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. p.38. Samuel Clutterbuck, a miner at Mt Alexander described in some detail his trade in 'opossum skins for a rug'. Pp.69,82

[554] Tame, Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings.

also extolled their manufacturing skills, noting 'they are very adept in curing skins perfectly' which are 'taken into the townships for sale'.[555] A number of miners were tutored by Aboriginal people in the trade of possum skin rug manufacture[556], a skilled trade which was recognized as extremely useful.

> I learnt the art of curing skins from Gardner at least simply drying them after a fashion he had learnt from the blacks. Small wooden pegs are cut and the skin is stretched with them on the back of a tree and left a couple of days in the sun after which they are ready for use most frequently they are sewn together for rugs 50 or 60 making a covering more durable and much warmer than a blanket.[557]

Some miners elaborated on the intercultural trade in possum skin rugs more than others. Owen Davies, a miner in the Ovens Valley merely noted in a letter that the 'natives make a great use of their skin'[558] whilst William Howitt added that their trade and commerce extended past inter-tribal lines, noting that 'they fish and hunt, make baskets and opossum rugs, and sell their produce to the white men.'[559] Likewise, artist and miner on the goldfields, George Rowe, wrote that the 'opossum fur is beautifully soft and makes a warm covering to sleep under and is what most diggers have as it is very light a good one costs four pounds.' Rowe reiterated in a later letter that the 'skins make a capital rug for sleeping under they are worth four pounds [and are] much used by the diggers being light and easily carried from one place to another.'[560]

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[555] Leatherbee, ed., Knocking About: Being Some Adventures of Augustus Baker Pierce in Australia. p.158

[556] A Batey describes in great detail the differing manufacturing processes of possum skin rug manufacture and considered the Aboriginal manufacture to be infinitely superior, describing how 'the aboriginals were fastidious in their choice of skins'. Batey, Reminiscences. pp.88-9

[557] Johnson, Papers.AB Pierce's experience mirrored Johnson's when stating: My days were employed in curing the skins of the possums in the native fashion (which is simply to peg them down on the ground and cover them with salt and ashes)…' Leatherbee, ed., Knocking About: Being Some Adventures of Augustus Baker Pierce in Australia. p.14

[558] O Davies, Papers, NLA MS, Canberra.

[559] Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold. p.143

[560] Rowe, Correspondence.

Aboriginal people moved quickly to grasp the economic opportunities presented to them by the miners flooding to the gold diggings. JF Hughes, a Castlemaine pioneer, recalled that possum skin and kangaroo skin rugs were "sold to settlers and lucky gold diggers at five pounds a-piece'[561] Miner James Arnot bought a possum rug in Melbourne made of 72 skins sewn together with sinews, also for five pounds.[562] Aboriginal people from the Mitta Mitta and Little River districts, to the east of the Ovens goldfield, paid regular visits with possum rugs for sale.[563] 'Neddy Wheeler', an Aboriginal man from the Yackadandah region in the 1850s was widely known to trade extensively in 'valuable' possum skins and lyre bird tails for the millinery industry. Though the goldfields prompted something of a population explosion in possums and hence the increased business activity by Aboriginal people in this manufacturing sector, reports continued to be relayed about the spike in the possum skin trade off the goldfields as well. The Indigenous manufacture of possum skin rugs, baskets and mats enabled many people at missions and reserves such as Coranderrk,[564] Lake Condah (Western district of Victoria) in December 1870 to gain an eagerly sought-after economic independence.[565] In the goldfields literature the

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[561] Hughes in Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. p.224

[562] Annear, Nothing but Gold: The Diggers of 1852. p.92. Arnot made constant reference to the great esteem he had in his 'opossum rug'. See: J Arnot, An Emigrants Journal, SLV Ms, Melbourne.

[563] Pepper and Araugo, What Did Happen to the Aborigines of Victoria: Volume 1: The Kurnai of Gippsland.p.102. Thomas Mitchell, an Honorary Correspondent to the Central Board of Aborigines in the Upper Murray region reported in 1866 that the local tribe hunted the possums 'the skins of which they make into cloaks and dispose of'. T Mitchell in CBo Aborigines, Fifth Annual Report on the Condition of Aborigines (Melbourne: Victorian Government, 1866).

[564] Mr Green, the Inspector of Stations noted the ready sale 'at high prices of baskets...rugs with the skins of the opossum, kangaroo and wallaby, for each of which they get from 1 pound to 1 pound 15s. Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fifth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in Victoria (Melbourne: Victoria Parliament, 1866). pp.5-8

[565] Quoted in Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria. p.84

ubiquity of references to the possum skin rugs usefulness is testimony to its importance.[566]

Cahir has noted that it is infinitely harder to determine exactly why Aboriginal entrepreneurs participated in the fur, feather and skins trade[567] with the colonists, but the acquisition of guns, exotic foods, tobacco, alcohol and other western goods were a strong incentive.[568] In John Zwar's boyhood reminiscences of the 'Puckapunyal tribe' in the 1860s, he recalls their business-like adroitness when selling their artisan products to non-Indigenous townsfolk: 'The Puckapunyal tribe, about twenty in number made baskets out of rushes...The blacks made very fine baskets out of the rushes and sold them to the people. I do not remember the price charged but I know they refused brown money; it had to be white [silver or gold].'[569] There is also substantial evidence that their societal emphasis on establishing and maintaining

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[566] Erskine's comment is atypical of miner's opinions about possum skin rugs utility, noting: 'the frost was severe towards the morning, making a good covering of blankets and opossum rugs necessary.' See: Erskine, A Short Account of the Late Discoveries of Gold in Australia. p.37. Campbell also recorded its practicality in treating cases of hypothermia. See: Campbell, Rough and Smooth or Ho! For an Australian Goldfield. p.69. A traveler on the goldfields noted: 'An opossum rug laid upon the ground and a couple of blankets spread over it, makes a famous bed.' M Hudson, Bound for the Goldfields: A True Account of a Journey from Melbourne to Castlemaine (Katoomba: Wayzgoose Press, 1990). AA Le Souef noted: 'I know nothing more delightful than camping out...wrapped in an opossum cloak or blanket, with your feet to the campfire.' Le Souef, Personal Recollections of Early Victoria. JS Prout, a writer and artist on the goldfields of Mt Alexander contended that 'an opossum rug leaves the comfort of a feather bed unwished for'. Prout, An Illustrated Handbook of the Voyage to Australia. p.25

[567] See DF Cahir, "Dallong - Possum Skin Rugs: A Study of an Intercultural Trade Item in Victoria," Provenance E-journal (2005).Emu, koala and seal skins (and also 'bullen bullen' or lyre bird feathers) were also a commodity commonly 'for sale' to the non-Indigenous colonists. See: Unknown, Blacks on Barham Station (Denbeigh) Murray River, NLA MS, Canberra, Batey, Reminiscences, S Clutterbuck, Diary, RHSV MS, Melbourne. p.92.; S Blainey, Nil Desperandum, SLV MS, Melbourne. p.16. Broome, Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800. p.104

[568] Further evidence supporting the supposition that Aboriginal people were earning considerable amounts of money for their possum skin rugs can be gleaned from a newspaper report which claimed that 'several aborigines had been selling opossum skins, and afterwards purchased spirits in large quantities'. .C Reporter, "Manslaughter," *Argus* 10 October 1860. An almost identical report was deposed in the Ballarat district in 1859. See: O'Grady, Inquest Deposition Files.

[569] Fletcher, ed., Broadford: A Regional History.pp.27-8

kinship relationships was a central imperative for their active forays into inter-cultural trading.[570]

It is not difficult on the other hand to determine why non-Indigenous miners sought to purchase the Aboriginal-made rugs. Miners and others writing in this period have left glowing reports about the benefits of obtaining possum skin rugs from the Aboriginal people. Miners considered that one rug imparted as much warmth as a dozen blankets and in summer they were stored until colder months returned.[571] George Henry Wathen, a visitor on the Victorian goldfields, also enthusiastically extolled the virtues of possessing a possum rug. Further, he acknowledged, if grudgingly, that people on the goldfields considered the possum skin rug to be undoubtedly the most highly valued intercultural trade item in Victoria: 'I was soon asleep on the ground, by the fire, under an overbowering banksia, wrapped in the warm folds of my opossum rug. For a night bivouac, there is nothing comparable to the opossum-rug; and it is perhaps the only good thing the white man has borrowed from the blacks.'[572] Others affirmed the same very high opinion of this Aboriginal manufactured product.[573]

The importance of possum skin rugs for the miners is exemplified when in 1865 a miner in the Carngham district, Henry Davies, sought to get the local Guardian of Aborigines to 'get an opossum rug made for him, to take home to the old country, to

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[570] Cahir, "Dallong - Possum Skin Rugs: A Study of an Intercultural Trade Item in Victoria."

[571] D Digwell, Stories Told around the Camp Fire (Edwards: Bendigo 1881). Digwell noted: 'I had an opossum rug, so he [fellow passenger on the ship] was right glad to let me in SC Ducker, ed., The Contented Botanist: Letters of W. H Harvey About Australia and the Pacific (MUP,Melbourne 1988). p.148. Digwell also wrote of using them Aboriginal style 'strapped around my shoulders'. GC Evans, Stories Told around the Camp Fire: Compiled from the Notebook of D. Digwell (Bendigo: Bendigo Independent Office, 1881).p.92. Henry Burchett wrote of a 'blackfellow possessed of a very handsome opossum rug., which the hutkeepers and shepherds endeavoured for a long time to do him out of' Burchett, Letters. p.77

[572] Wathen, The Golden Colony, or Victoria in 1854: With Remarks on the Geology of the Australian Gold Fields. p.131

[573] Burchett describes a 'humorous incident' whereupon an unidentified Aboriginal man is played a trick on (involving the Aborigine's possum skin rug) by several non-Indigenous men who covet it. See:Burchett, Letters.

show what the pioneers of the goldfields frequently used to sleep in. An Aboriginal couple was engaged to make a rug that they completed in four days, and were paid 30 shillings'.[574] Other miners noted their fondness for the possum skin rugs in a more lyrical manner: 'A fire is lighted, the meal is taken, and the romance of your first night out is enjoyed. You are wrapped in a possum rug or blanket beside your fire.'[575]

The sale of possum skin rugs, baskets and artifacts to non-Indigenous miners, as with the commodification of corroborees for non-Indigenous audiences, had commenced from the first days of colonization in Victoria, fifteen years prior to the gold rush. This is a significant point, as discussion about Victorian Aboriginal's rapid acculturation of the supply-and-demand model of monetary commerce has received scant attention by historians and other writers.[576] During the pastoral period, Cahir argues, economic activity between Victorian Aboriginal people and non-Indigenous people was enacted for social, political and monetary purposes. But increasingly during the gold rush period the emphasis in inter-cultural trade can be seen to be focused on financial gain.[577] Of course for all societies, exchange, whether monetary or not, is imbued with cultural practices and values, though externally the exchange may at times appear devoid of a significant degree of symbolic function. Aboriginal peoples' 'commercial instinct' was noted by miners to be highly developed, meaning they knew the monetary value of their manufactured products and asked a good price for it, yet embedded within the straight up commercial transaction were probably the systemic values of reciprocity and kinship. Samuel Clutterbuck noted with some displeasure how money had clearly displaced barter in their dealings with non-

[574] "The Decaying Race," *London Times* 1865.
[575] Bonwick, Notes of a Gold Digger and Gold Digger's Guide. p.5
[576] See Cahir for a more in-depth discussion on this issue in: Cahir, "Dallong - Possum Skin Rugs: A Study of an Intercultural Trade Item in Victoria."
[577] Cahir, "Dallong - Possum Skin Rugs: A Study of an Intercultural Trade Item in Victoria."

Indigenous people: 'The blacks took their departure, Simon promising on his next passing, to bring me a new opossum rug and one each of their different implements of war and hunting. I asked him if I should give him a fine shirt in return. He replied "Borag [Borak: No] shirt, give it plenty white money". I may here state, that the "amor munni" [love of money?] is as strong with the aborigines as their paler faced bretheren.'[578] RB Smyth, a noted nineteenth century ethnologist, also considered that Victorian Aboriginal people 'barter with their neighbours; and it would seem that as regards the articles in which they deal, barter is as satisfactory to them as sale would be. They are astute in dealing with the whites, and it may be supposed they exercise reasonable forethought and care when bargaining with their neighbours.'[579]

Walter Bridges, a miner at Buninyong near Ballarat in 1855, described how a local clan of Wathawurrung people carrying possum skin rugs approached his wife and made a request, framed within the ties of reciprocity of neighbours, for some steel needles and thread: 'So up they come yabbering good day Missie you my countary woman now. My mother had to be the spokesman the Blacks said You gottum needle Missie you gottum thread...Then the Luberes come jabbering along behind carring the swag in nets some with pups that could not walk, others possum skin rugs the Blackfellows make'.[580] It is probable that the demand for non-Indigenous sewing implements stemmed from the high volume of possum skin rugs being sold on the goldfields.

With thousands of miners congregating in towns across Victoria, the volume of trade in possum skins increased exponentially. Frequent references in miners' accounts attest to the commercial acumen of some Indigenous people in the colony. Edward

[578] Clutterbuck, Diary. p.40
[579] Smyth, The Aborigines of Victoria. p.180
[580] Bridges, The Travels of Walter Bridges. pp.10-11

Tame, a traveler on the goldfields, noted that the skins of possums 'form good articles of commerce' for the 'Aborigines' he frequently encountered.[581] HW Wheelwright confirmed Tame's opinion, writing in the 1850s: 'for of all the coverings in dry cold weather, an opossum-skin rug is the best, as I can well testify.' He recommended that, 'If any blacks are handy, it is best to get them to sew the skins, for a black's rug beats any other'.[582] Reports from a number of Aboriginal Station Managers across Victoria describe the lucrative trade being conducted. According to John Green, the manager of 'Coranderrk' (the Aboriginal station in Healesville) the high quality of the rugs, and the speed with which the Aboriginal people could manufacture them, combined with their ready sale, enabled some Indigenous Victorians to achieve a degree of economic independence: 'In the course of one week or so they will all be living in huts instead of willams [traditional bark housing]; they have also during that time [four months] made as many rugs, which has enabled them to buy boots, hats, coats etc., and some of them has [sic] even bought horses.'[583] Similarly, Andrew Porteous, an Honorary Correspondent for the Aborigines in the Ballarat District (1860-77), reported that the demand for Aboriginal manufactured goods continued to be a lucrative 'exportation for which they were well paid by the whites' after the alluvial gold rushes had petered out. In 1866 he reported on the significant degree of interest shown in local Wathawurrung manufactures:

> The tribe still continue to make possum rugs, and if steady, might make a good living by it, as they generally get 20s. to 30s. for each rug, which they can make

[581] Tame, Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings.
[582] H Wheelwright, Bush Wanderings of a Naturalist (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1979).
[583] S Wiencke, When the Wattles Bloom Again: The Life and Times of William Barak (Woori Yallock: Wiencke, 1984). p.52

> in 14 days. The women also employ themselves in making baskets and nets, which they sell to the European.[584]

In 1867 and again in 1872, Porteous reiterated the same theme of commercial activity.

> They continue to hunt such game as can be found in the district. The opossum is plentiful, and they make rugs with the skins. They sell the opossum rugs, and sometimes offer fish for sale, with the proceeds of which they supply themselves with rations, and sometimes with clothes, such as hats, handkerchiefs, and some of them with boots...they have been traveling amongst the stations, only a few calling for rations...they still fish when fish can be got, and hunt the opossum, and make rugs of the skins. The women continue to make baskets and nets, but unfortunately, they still indulge in intoxicating drink.[585]

Newspaper reports from home and abroad also reveal a strong interest in Indigenous manufactured goods, particularly in possum skin rugs.[586] In 1861 the *Ballarat Star* carried a satirical article supposedly attributed to 'A Blackfellow' which beseeched the Colonial Government to provide market protection for the Indigenous trade in possum skin rugs:

> You write guv'nor and ask him why protection on the wallaby track looking for grubs 'mong whitefellow? You say whitefellow no make um blankets this colony, blackfellow make 'possum rug, which whitefellow ought to buy 'stead of blanket; possum rug all along same as whitefellow's blankets;- why not give blackfellow monopoly of making and selling 'em and protect real native industry.[587]

It was not only a degree of economic independence that the sale of possum rugs brought to the Aboriginal people of Victoria. Eugene Von Guerard, a renowned artist on the Victorian goldfields, documented an inter-cultural trading transaction in 1854.

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[584] A Porteous in:Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fifth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in Victoria.

[585] Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Sixth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria (Melbourne: Victoria Parliament, 1869), Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament.

[586] Blandowski, a Victorian naturalist offered in 1854 that possum skin furs 'will no doubt , at some future time, become an article of commercial value.' Blandowski, Personal Observations in the Central Parts of Victoria. p.22

[587] Anonymous, "Protection to Native Industry by a Blackfellow," The Star 16 July 1861. pp.7-8

His oil painting, *Aborigines on the road to diggings* or *The Barter*, now in the Geelong Gallery, depicts Wathawurrung people offering possum rugs for sale to white miners on their way to the goldfields. What is of particular interest about Von Guerard's painting is the centrality of the Wathawurrung men and women. Unlike many artists' depictions of Aboriginal people during the nineteenth century, in which they are peripheral players cast off to the background or figures relegated to the sidelines, Von Guerard has focused the activity around confident Aboriginal salespeople who are clearly directing the business deal. Moreover, the white 'consumer' desiring to purchase the possum rugs is painted in a subservient pose, kneeling down, whilst the Aboriginal 'manufacturer' assumes an upright, dominant demeanor. A number of commentators writing on Aboriginal society in the nineteenth century conceded that the Aboriginal people of Victoria also possessed a good deal of business acumen in other areas of commerce such as the performing arts, an issue taken up in the next section.

CORROBOREES

Ceremonies performed by Victorian Aboriginal people, described under the banner of 'corroborees', were performed for non-Indigenous people from the very outset of non-Indigenous contact.[588] The popularity of the corroboree as a piece of theatrical entertainment was immense in both the pastoral and gold period. Though not often articulated by historians, the nineteenth century corroboree performed for non-

[588] As the Melbourne-based *Table Talk* commented on 21 January 1887: 'Ever since British rule was established in Australia, an aboriginal "corroboree" has always been considered an amusing, if not a particularly edifying spectacle for distinguished visitors'. Escaped convict from a short-lived penal settlement at Sorrento, William Buckley, recorded being regaled at a corroboree by Wathawurrung (Bengallut Bulluk clan) people in 1803, thirty-two years before official occupation commenced in 1835. CE Sayers, ed., The Life and Adventures of William Buckley (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1967). pp.23-4

Indigenous colonial audiences was Australia's pre-eminent prototypical Indigenous cultural tourism product.[589] The development of the corroboree event by Aboriginal (and non-Indigenous) entrepreneurs gave witness to some very innovative and successful transformations during the gold period.[590] There exists a plethora of accounts by miners and other observers[591] who actively attended corroborees and also a number who penned their perceived notions of corroborees into their reminiscences to afford some savage exotica to their tale of the goldfields. Edward Tame's 'Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings' is an illustration of what his fervid imagination and a potpourri of second-hand stories, some with foundation and some without substance, has conspired into a description of a corroboree – not seen.

> NATIVE CORROBOREE
> I will now tell you of another small adventure out in the bush. On this occasion I was late in the evening clearing out of the diggings [in the Ballarat district], so I made all possible speed to come to a suitable place in the bush for our nights camp...After supper we retired to rest as usual, but sleep was impossible, for over a hill there must have been a host of natives who were shouting and singing jabber jabber jabbering all the night. I had never heard the like before and our curiosity was very great to know what was going on, but not sufficiently so to induce us to rise and try to see. They seemed to be having a fine time and enjoying themselves thoroughly. It was what they call a Corroboree. These corroborees are almost invariably held on bright moonlight nights, when I am told they indulge in various amusements, dancing, singing, story telling, but

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[589] For further discussion on the commodification of the corroboree for non-Indigenous audiences see: Parsons, "The Tourist Corroboree in South Australia."

[590] There is a considerable corpus of evidence demonstrating the gold period, was a catalyst for corroboree performances to morph, probably aided by the movement of Aboriginal people across the continent becoming more common. As an example JD Mereweather was informed that the corroboree he witnessed in central New South Wales 'had come from the coast of South Australia.' Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. pp.181-2. Similarly, Lawrence Struilby witnessed corroborees that had been passed on with greater rapidity since the gold period had opened up communications in the interior. Graham, ed., Observations and Experiences During 25 Years of Bush Life in Australia. pp.120-144. For further discussion of corroboree songs indicating Aboriginal responses to the non-Indigenous invaders see: B McDonald, "Evidence of Four New England Corroboree Songs Indicating Aboriginal Responses to European Invasion," Aboriginal History 20.1 (1996).

[591] At Rheola miners gathered to watch a corroboree. See: R Carless, History of Rheola (Rheola: Back to Rheola Committee, 1985). p.3. In 1865 William Candy witnessed a very large corroboree at Warracknabeal and William McDonald recorded his observations of an important corroboree at Nhill in 1862. See: Longmire, Nine Creeks to Albacutya - a History of the Shire of Dimboola. p.5. At Seymour, a Mr. Howard recalled there were 'plenty of blacks in the fifties and many a corroboree he has witnessed. He tells with a laugh that it was "stand clear" if they fell out. Cited in J Jennings and V Jennings, Memories of Seymour (Seymour: Seymour and District Historical Society, 2003). p.15

> especially spear throwing. Smothering themselves with paint, grease and feathers (men only). These are sometimes in imitation of animal motions and habits, and often warlike and licentious. Whole tribes will often meet at these times and many ceremonies gone through with most disgusting and cruel practices, especially in connection with initiation into manhood and womanhood. One part of the ceremony often consists of colouring the boy about ten years of age with blood from head to foot, several men bleeding themselves for the purpose.[592]

In their description of corroborees they had witnessed with their own eyes, other miners, such as Edwin Middleton, emphasized the vigour, dramatics and nudity.[593] Some miners appeared to have come upon the corroboree serendipitously whilst others were invited and egged on[594] by Aboriginal people to view their ceremony. Usually it would seem to signify an exchange that had occurred.

> At night they had a big Corroboree on a grand scale: 4 women sitting by a fire beating time with sticks and 8 or 9 men dancing the Corroboree. With the exception of a small apron made of grass, they were entirely naked. As they danced they kept up a humming noise, every now and again breaking out with their cry of Coohooee. The men were daubed all over with coloured clays and looked most hideous. To see them every time their Gins put fresh leaves on the fire, you might fancy you were on the borders of some of the [ ] regions. [595]

Michael Parsons, writing on the tourist corroboree in nineteenth century South Australia has argued that corroborees staged by Aboriginal people for a non-Indigenous audience emerged as a 'cultural product jointly negotiated between two cultures'. Furthermore, he posits that during the process of negotiation, four major framings of corroboree can be identified. Of these four, three were often only witnessed by invited guests. There is a surfeit of historic examples in Victoria within the study period which fit neatly into the four major framings outlined by Parsons.

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[592] Tame, Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings. pp.41-2

[593] Charles Panton, a Commissioner on the goldfields appreciatively described in great detail several different corroborees performed by hundreds of Aboriginal people 'night after night' at Mangalore Station in Central Victoria. See: Panton, The Autobiography of J.A Panton.

[594] Samuel Clutterbuck told of being 'summoned' to see a corroboree and during a break in the festivities being asked for 'bacca'

[595] Middleton, A Description of the Life and Times in Victoria in the 1860's by a Young Colonist. p.57

Firstly, the 'peace corroboree', marking a new state of cooperative relations between Aboriginal people and the Crown, or representations of the Crown such as 'gentlemen squatters'. There was usually a misunderstood exchange that cemented the new co-relationship, illustrated by a paternalistic report in the *Ararat Advertiser*:

> "On Thursday," says the *Ararat Advertiser*, "Ararat was favoured by a visit from a number of distinguished strangers, the most illustrious of whom was 'King Koonawarn,' who was accompanied by his Royal consort, 'Granny,' and about seven or eight retainers. His Majesty is a fine specimen of our sable Kings, in so far as height and figure are concerned, both being well shown off by a pair of close-fitting pantaloons, and rather tight shooting jacket. The King had no boots, but was making anxious inquiries for a pair at the police camp, and it is not improbable that the retainers of Her Imperial Majesty may strengthen the existing relationship between the sovereigns by granting his Majesty's request. 'King Koonawarn,' on behalf of himself and subjects, made some diplomatic hints in deference to tobacco and blankets, which are being considered favourably, in as much as the police magistrate telegraphed to Mr. Brough Smyth to know in what way the Royal request for the latter necessaries could be best complied with...The King and his staff were requested to visit Mr. Thomson's station for supplies; but this his majesty declined, because 'it was too muchee plain,' and out of his dominions. We learnt that this tribe has traveled from Mortlake here, for the double purpose of obtaining blankets and joining in a general corroboree'[596]

Secondly, the 'command performance' corroboree, a restatement of the above, but now orchestrated by the new occupiers as a joint act of homage to the Crown. This was itself a re-framing of the corroboree as a traditional act of welcome, but also functioned for settlers as a handy piece of ready-made uniquely local pageantry that could be included on the program for notable official visitors. Thus in 1867 Buninyong Council wrote to Andrew Porteous the local Guardian of Aborigines in the Ballarat District informing him 'the Council has determined on getting up a grand corroboree of the Natives on the occasion [his Royal Highness the Duke of

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[596] *Ararat Advertiser*, *Argus* 25 June 1866. Others such as Bishop at Essendon and Eberlie at Skipton witnessed similar 'peace' corroborees to the one described at Ararat. See: G Bishop, Memoirs of George Gregor Bishop, RHSV, Melbourne, Eberlie, Diary. John Loorham recounted how 'hundreds of blacks...had come to do homage to the white child they heard had been born [October 1863]...After that they held a corroboree and the next day they went away.' Cited in: Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District. p.7

Edinburgh's visit to Buninyong]. I have therefore to beg that you will be pleased to secure as many of the aboriginals as possible for that purpose; every care will be taken of the Blacks whilst in the locality.'[597]

Thirdly, the 'gala' corroboree, the commoner's imitation of the vice-regal 'command performance' corroboree to mark significant social occasions. This drew on both the framings already described, but allowed all colonial notables to play at being Governor, while like him, enjoying and entertaining new arrivals with a suitably novel, uniquely local entertainment.

The intermingling (or 'bleeding' as Parsons describes it) from one framing to another allowed any significant colonial or Aboriginal occasion – anything from the opening of a railway line[598] to the separation of Victoria from New South Wales – to add a vice-regal relish to a common occasion through the staging of a corroboree. In the fourth, Parsons argues that within the 'commercial or touristic framing of the corroboree, the performers and promoters were able to trade on the sense of privilege and occasion established by all the co-existing framings of peace corroboree, command performance and gala corroboree, enhancing its commercial value.'[599]

Evidence of the fourth 'touristic' framing of the corroboree is particularly evident in goldfields historical records. A corroboree got up by Wathawurrung clans (probably Carninje balug and Wongerrer balug) amply illustrates that as access to their land and its raw materials, their economic capital, was progressively denied them by

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[597] Netell, Town Clerks Correspondence. At the opening of several regional railways across Victoria in the nineteenth century Aboriginal people were recorded as having performed dances such as at Dunolly and Beaufort. Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings, Keays, "Aborigines in the Beaufort District,"vol. Also see: P Carter, Living in a New Country (London: Faber, 1992).

[598] *Riponshire Advocate* reported the presence of Aboriginal people dancing at the opening of the line between Beaufort and Ballarat. Quoted in Keays, "Aborigines in the Beaufort District,"vol.

[599] Parsons, "The Tourist Corroboree in South Australia."pp.46-7. In the Minutes of the Ballarat Mechanic's Institute in February 1879 there are references to the hire of a lecture hall for an 'Aboriginal Concert' that had been held. Presumably this was an instance of non-Indigenous goldfields promoters trading on the sense of exotica which Aboriginal performances provided. Ballarat Mechanic's Institute Committee, Committee Minute Book (Ballarat: Mechanic's Institute, 1879).

pastoralism and then gold mining, Aboriginal people seized upon the opportunity to market their cultural knowledge and skills, their symbolic capital, and convert it, not just into hand-outs of food and tobacco, but hard currency.

> A CORROBOREE – During the past few days the town of Smythesdale has been infested by a numerous gang of aborigines-men, women, and children. On Tuesday and Wednesday they went about the town in quest of sixpences, tobacco &c., and announcing a grand "corroboree" to come off on Wednesday night, as it accordingly did, in the presence of a hundred spectators or more. The savages were in their war paint, and looked sufficiently frightful as they danced and shrieked round their fire. The scene of the orgie was in the wood over the creek, near the Carngham road; and the dissonant noises, vocal and instrumental, which formed part of the entertainment, were distinctly heard at the firesides in the township. The thing was kept up till an advanced hour in the morning.[600]

This event and others like it were independently organized, without joint partnership of any kind, were pre-planned, not ad hoc. It is plausible that in one sense the gold era ushered in more opportunities to perform corroborees, as more spectators inevitably ensured more food and rewards for the performers, and the application by non-Indigenous people for more performances may have led to some small degree of reliability of income.[601] Special occasions such as Christmas Day may have been taken advantage of, judging by a diary entry by Mrs. James Madden, of corroborees in the Ballarat district in 1853 which were well attended by Aboriginal (presumably Wathawurrung) and non-Indigenous miners: 'Ballarat seemed to be on the wane and we set out for Mt Cole for timber for the homestead at St Enochs...Here we arrived on Christmas day, 1853, and were entertained by about two hundred and fifty blacks

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[600] Grenville Advocate, "A Corroboree," *Argus* 28 April 1863.

[601] A measure of Aboriginal people's adapting of Aboriginal skills to Western monetary economies and identifying a market for performing traditional skills can be gleaned from a report in a local Wahgunyah history publication regarding Tommy Anthony, a local Aboriginal, who would 'attend football matches and give demonstrations of boomerang throwing. Afterwards he would go around with his hat. It is said that for the first few throws he would attempt to catch the boomerang when it returned, but purposely missed. A few more pennies would be thrown to the ground in a wager and when he considered that there were enough there, or someone might catch onto his game, he would make the boomerang soar and deftly catch it on its return.' McGivern, Big Camp Wahgunyah: History of the Rutherglen District.

at a grand corroboree at night.'[602] Reports such as appeared in the *Corowa Free Press* indicate that Aboriginal people were financially supporting themselves through performing corroborees, and were somewhat adept at petitioning for pre-booking fees, and actively promoted and marketed their cultural heritage product within their means to do so.

> The Aborigines had promised for some weeks beforehand that there would be a grand affair on a Saturday evening which was well attended by the townsfolk...some of them going around town asking for a mug of beer or some food, or some cast-off clothing before the corroborees...At the conclusion the hat was taken around and the ringmaster stated: 'That he didn't mind if they gave one shilling or six pence Koonong. Tommy said they would have an ever greater corroboree when the Wangaratta blacks came over [603]

In addition to Parsons' four major framings of corroborees or dance events staged by Aboriginal people for a non-Indigenous audience could be added the 'solemn and sacred' corroboree encompassing purely Aboriginal matters that was deigned strictly invitation only.[604] A satirical *Argus* report of an impending corroboree by Wathawurrung clans in the Geelong district and in the same year a report of a very large gathering of several language groups at Braidwood indicates that the continuance of 'welcoming to country' ceremonies were still being performed, but increasingly under the shadow of the colonizers gaze. Events such as these were

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[602] Cited in: C Notman, 'out of the Past': The Story of Skipton. 1839-1939 (Ballarat: Waller and Chester, 1939). p.7

[603] *Corowa Free Press* not known 1876.

[604] In May 1860, 'an extraordinary exhibition' was given by the Djadjawurrung at Lamplough mining community. One scene involved two men decorated with white chalk killing a third man, in red paint, and burying him under one of the stage's trapdoors, whereupon he reappeared from another trapdoor smothered with white chalk, having 'jumped up whitefellow'. "Exhibition at Lamplough," *Mount Ararat and Pleasant Creek Advertiser* 22 May 1860. William Thomas, Assistant Protector of Aborigines in the Melbourne and Westernport districts was advised by a Boonwurrung elder that some corroborees were off limits to white people, they being explained as being too sacred and likened to 'white fellows Sunday'. Thomas cited in: M Cannon, ed., The Aborigines of Victoria: 1835-1839, vol. 2B (Melbourne: VGPO, 1982). John Kerr, a pastoralist in the Loddon district recorded that after the death of a local elder (c.1850s) that his 'presence was requested at the funeral...and though I was invited to attend the ceremonies, there was a certain degree of mystery about their proceedings which led me to infer that there were particulars which were concealed from me.' Hancock, ed., Glimpses of Life in Victoria by a Resident. p.147. Henry Burchett on the Lower Loddon diggings also experienced a 'native funeral ceremony to which few white men are admitted...after asking permission' in April 1854. Burchett, Letters. p.91

probably viewed by non-Indigenous people who may have been barred from attending such events prior to the gold rush period.

> FASHIONABLE ARRIVALS –His Royal Highness Ko Ko Warrion, King of Colac, arrived at the Barwon Bridge a little after ten o'clock yesterday morning, from whence His Royal Highness was escorted into town by a mottle assembly of young blades, who did everything in their power to make the King's entrance into the ancient city of Geelong a perfect jubilee. His Majesty's suite consisted of nine peers and a countess. We were given to understand by one black fellow that Geelong was honored by the royal visitors for the purpose of dancing "great corroboree" this day, in honour of our most gracious Majesty's birthday.[605]

> The *Federal Standard* says:- "In the Braidwood district, in the course of a week or two, we are told that a very large gathering of aboriginal natives will take place, for the purpose of celebrating one of their periodical festivals. The sons of the sable race are to come from all the neighbouring districts, including the Murrumbidgee, Murray, and Lachlan, and it is thought by the 'darkies,' who are at present arranging matters to receive their guests, that no less than 600 or 700 blackfellows will be present at the corroboree. The festival will take place at Tudor Valley, where a large ring is already formed for them to dance around. The 'natives' will appear 'painted and feathered,' as is their custom on occasions of this sort; and, to wind up the proceedings the young men eligible for marriage will undergo the interesting ceremony of having their front tooth knocked out.[606]

The religious or 'peace' corroboree was also recorded as being performed on the goldfields, probably witnessed by uninvited non-Indigenous audiences.[607] George Rowe, writing a letter from the Castlemaine diggings recorded a conversation with a Djadjawurrung woman who had remonstrated with a neighbouring clan and intimated that a peace making 'religious' corroboree was to be held at the McIvor diggings.

> The group was the Bendigo tribe two men and a woman came up while I was at there and a young woman addressed them in a rage and threatened them with a stick to drive them away one of them a very fine handsome fellow with a slightly aquiline nose standing erect above 6 feet stood calmly surveying them all the time with his long spear erect – she got tired at last when she told me she spoke a little English "that he Murry river blackfellow he kill Bendigo

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[605] Geelong Chronicle, "Fashionable Arrivals," *Argus* 28 May 1863.
[606] Federal Standard, *Argus* 9 April 1863.
[607] Gold Commissioner JA Panton recorded in his reminiscences having witnessed a sacred 'Myndee' ceremony similar to a one recorded in the *Daylesford Gazette* in 1883, witnessed forty years prior. Panton, The Autobiography of J.A Panton.

> blackfellow he no here Bendigo he go away" – after all she gave him a loaf of bread and another party gave him half a damper which they had been eating from and then they walked they together with the Bendigo tribe were on their way to MacIvor to a corroboray on the next evening being new moon it is some sort of religious ceremony when they dance all night and a very large number arrive perhaps 500 or 1000[608]

In addition, it is quite likely that the gold era ushered in, or at the very least enabled a greater frequency of, the staging of corroborees just for the fun of it, or as a correspondent for the *Maryborough Advertiser* implied as a celebration to mark the occasion of when a 'four and a half ounce nugget' was found by them. The reporter noted: "The proceeds, amounting to 18 pounds, were soon disposed of, and a grand corroboree has been held ever since, and doubtless will continue till all the money is gone."[609] This type of impromptu corroboree may explain the poor comparisons made by some 'old hands' between the corroborees of the 1840s and later years.[610]
The frequent occurrence in miners' accounts of festive corroborees testifies to the frequency that Aboriginal people held such events. Moreover it also signifies that many non-Indigenous spectators recognized the uniqueness of what they were witnessing. In memoirs and reminiscences of diggers the corroboree is a piece of exotica only to be found in Australia; a unique form of entertainment in which their descriptions were pockmarked with expressions such as 'heathenish' and 'savage'. Robert Whittle, a storekeeper at Daisy Hill and Talbot in 1857, witnessed a corroboree by Djadjawurrung people and announced: 'I can never forget the sound of the droning song interjected with occasional unearthly shouts and yells, from three or four hundred savage throats...the moon shining silvery and clear meanwhile through the gnarled branches of the box trees above us on this wild, weird scene of

[608] Rowe, Correspondence.
[609] Maryborough Advertiser.
[610] Forster, Waranga. pp.6-7

superstitious savagery.'[611] For some it was a mere diversion that hardly rated a mention[612] such as John Chandler who was only moved to quip: 'There was a tribe of blacks come to Melton and held a corroboree, and this was the last time I saw a whole tribe together, this was in 1863. Alas! Poor things, they are all gone now.'[613] Likewise Thomas Booth remarked only that 'The blacks often camped at what was known as the Big Dam close to the township [Buninyong] where they adorned themselves with pipe clay and held corroborees.'[614] Family histories too are often bereft of any detail other than their occurrence in an area, such as occurs in 'The Story of the Family Called White: 1852-1982' whose sole contribution on the subject is: 'There were aborigines in the Cardigan area [Ballarat region] in the early days, and stories are told of corroborees seen near Bunker's Hill.'[615] Goldfields newspapers tended to memorialize the corroboree, and often was the subject of some commentary[616] such as an article which appeared in the *Inglewood Advertiser* on 2 May 1865. The writer infers, and is certainly corroborated by other reports, that one of the prime motivational factors of Aboriginal people's visit was to corroboree and gain monetarily from their 'white brethren's' proclivity for the entertainment they provided.

> Natives. Inglewood is now honored with the presence of a body of natives, male and female, who have come down from their native river, the Murray, to see their white brethren inhabiting this town. It is some time since they paid us a visit and their appearance in the street, with their long spears, opossum cloaks,

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[611] R Whittle, Reminiscences, SLV MS 11829, Melbourne. p.77

[612] JJ Bond, a miner at Benalla wrote in his memoirs of a corroboree he witnessed, stating only: 'the severe exercise produced so powerful an odour it affected my nostrils like snuff'. Bond, Memoirs. p.74. Oliver Ragless at Mt Alexander goldfields noted only that 'they make the same dismal corroboree as the other natives of South Australia' Ragless, ed., Oliver's Diary: An 'Andkerchief of Eirth. p.56

[613] Cannon, ed., Forty Years in the Wilderness. p.175

[614] Booth, Diary of Thomas Booth. p.2

[615] Vea Adamthwaite, The Story of the Family Called White; 1852-1982 (Ballarat: Waller and Chester, 1982). p.12. Also see: E Laidler, Maldon, RHSV MS, Melbourne. pp.2-3

[616] In May 1860, 'an extraordinary exhibition' was given by the Djadjawurrung at Lamplough. A corroboree in five acts was performed in the Theatee Royal. The *Mount Ararat and Pleasant Creek Advertiser* condemned the corroboree as 'altogether very apprehensible'. Cited in T Griffiths, Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia (Melbourne: CUP, 1996). p.52

> etc form quite a novel feature. There are about twelve of them, accompanied by some lubras and their King with a few picaninnies. Disdaining the use of the white man's road, they struck direct from the Murray through the scrub to Thompson's Gully, where they camped on Saturday night, right upon the spot where, six years ago a lubra was buried. Yesterday they were busy levying contributions, and showed a great predilection for white money. Last night they held a grand corroboree, which was quite a success, and attracted many visitors.[617]

This Aboriginal style of entrepreneurial activity was endemic throughout the goldfields. Without the aid of bill posters or newspapers to promote their event, it seems that on many occasions Aboriginal performers put on an 'appearance' with all their accoutrements in the streets to elicit interest in their exotic difference and announce their intent to perform. A number of corroborees reported upon, such as several at Echuca,[618] included their colourful presence as an incentive to witness in itself.

> Several corroborees have been held during the past week close to Echuca by the blacks, who, to the number of about 200, have assembled there from all quarters within a radius of about a hundred miles.
> *The Riverina Herald* reports "that there are a large number of fine, strapping and even handsome, young men among them-one fellow in particular, is notable for his height, standing on his bare soles over six feet. A young lubra, rejoining in the name of Polly, struck everyone who saw her yesterday as she perambulated High Street with her rather diminutive spouse, from her great height and erect carriage. We understand that she measures over 5ft 8in. There is a good sprinkling of old and very grey-bearded men... The occasion is considered one of high holiday and festival. No doubt the time is spent idly enough, but as to the feasting, we fear it is not to be compared to what it was in the olden time."[619]

An article in the *Border Post* provided a description of a corroboree that had been witnessed near Ballarat on 28 March 1857 demonstrates the considerable attraction an event like this had on a wide range of Ballarat residents. The correspondent reported:

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[617] Quoted in Nixon, Inglewood Gold. p.37

[618] Riverine Herald, "Some Loddon Blacks," *Argus* 3 January 1865. 'Some Loddon blacks, who have been camping lately on the river near Echuca, held a corroboree last week, much to the amusement of the visitors from Melbourne. King Billy and King Cockey took advantage of the opportunity to introduce themselves to the strangers.' Also see: "Several Corroborees," *Argus* 23 February 1866.

[619] R Herald, "Several Corroborees," *Argus* 8 February 1866.

'We agreed to walk out as far as the camping ground at the ever famous Swamp [now Lake Wendouree] to see the blackfellow's corroboree...Groups of well dressed Europeans, both males and females were gathered around to witness the strange forms and stranger evolutions of this singular race...'[620] In the context of European racial discourse Tsari Anderson considers that reports of this nature reveal the high level of interest 'Europeans in nineteenth century Australia showed in the "peculiarities" of Aboriginal culture and society; of the way Aboriginal people were viewed as remarkably different, even opposite, to Europeans; and of the general confusion between race and culture.'[621] A number of un-attributed articles appearing in *The Argus* and the *Geelong Advertiser* during the 1850s purporting to be translations of corroboree songs affirm Anderson's position

> SELECT POETRY- TRANSLATIONS OF ABORIGINAL POESY.
> The white man dropped from the sun bright sky,
> For he envied the blackfellows' land,
> With greed and revenge in his restless eye,
> And he grasped the forest, and seized the strand,
> And claimed the blue mountains high;
> And he scours the bush with ruthless band,
> 'Till its' denizens trembling fly-
> And his pigs and his cattle polluted the land
> 'Till it stinks, and the blackfellows die.[622]

Historian Richard Broome largely concurs, but interestingly adds an inquiry: what of the Aboriginal racial discourse?

> We know European artists drew corroborees as dramatic open-air events, exotic and archetypal representations of 'savagery'. Were Aborigines showing ritual about country to welcome, impress and claim ownership? Were they

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[620] "Corroboree," *Border Post* 28 March 1857. p.2
[621] Anderson, "The Aboriginal Experiment: European Racial Discourse and Practice in Gippsland, Victoria, 1860-1895." p.9
[622] *Geelong Advertiser*, "Select Poetry: Translations of Aboriginal Poesy," *Argus* 14 September 1855. Also see: *Geelong Advertiser*, "Aboriginal Poesy," *Argus* 30 July 1855. 'Tho thou hast done no ill, the white man will thee kill; He has seized the Koorites lands, And thy blood will stain his hands, And thy lubra, young and coy! He'll yard her and he'll guard her, And from the wild dog ward her; Yet he guards but to destroy...'

> increasingly influenced by a new or additional profit motive, as money, rations and alcohol flowed their way at such events?[623]

A contrasting set of partial Aboriginal outlooks on the merits of touristic corroborees for non-Indigenous audiences, (partial because the Aboriginal discourse is viewed through non-Indigenous reporters lenses) can be attained from newspaper reports such as appeared in the *Argus* (March 1857) and the *Ballarat Star* (May 1860). A correspondent for the *Ballarat Times*, after witnessing a well attended corroboree at Lake Wendouree met with a small party of Wathawurrung people who 'seemed grieved at the revelry and debauch which on hands surrounded them, and was evidently taking no part in the noisy performance.'[624] The disdain which this group held for such an event is juxtaposed with the renewed sense of independence and pride observed of a neighbouring Djabwurrung clan at Back Creek who performed for diggers also:

> In one communication lately inserted in the *Star*, I stated that a party of Aboriginals had made their appearance histrionically, on the stage at the Royal, and that the audience were highly pleased at witnessing the intelligence of the sable tribe. The warm reception they got has completely transmogrified them from slow motioned bush wanderers to aristocrats, possessing strong self esteem. They were engaged to give a grand performance at the Back Creek Theatre Royal last week. The contractors no doubt expected them to walk the distance of ten miles, but he found to his astonishment that they had grown so aristocratic since their appearance at the Royal that they refused to stir one inch unless their passage was paid by Cobb's coach or a "special" grand conveyance procured for them.[625]

Judging from the frequency with which such events were held, the substantial turn out of paying non-Indigenous viewers, how well organized the dance troupes were and the developing Western styled business acumen they displayed it is clear that monetary considerations became an underpinning feature in the performance of

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[623] Broome, Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800. pp.110-11
[624] Ballaarat Times, "A Corroboree," *Argus* 13 March 1857.
[625] "Ambition in Aboriginals," *Ballarat Star* 29 May 1860.

corroborees for non-Indigenous audiences particularly after the 1850s.[626] A lengthy quote from the 'Memoirs of George Bishop – Essendon: 1908' tells of a corroboree that took place at Essendon (Northern suburb of Melbourne). It shows strong indicators of Parsons praxis of corroborees being jointly negotiated cultural products being framed into new economic paradigms on Aboriginal terms:

> I have witnessed several corroborees, between eight and fourteen, but the one before last, in 1868, saw two northern tribes from Ballarat [presumably Wathawurrung] and Bendigo [presumably Djadjawurrung], coming by different routes, arriving in Essendon at the same time. As they were friendly they camped near one another and Mr. Jamieson and others asked them for their usual display and they gave a double performance – first the men and then the lubras. A very large number of the residents were present and as I have a retentive memory and have preserved my notes, I will give a description of the dance and its surroundings as they occurred.
> It took place about halfway between Lincoln Road and Mount Alexander Road and on the other side of the first of two gullies, at eight p.m. on a dark night as a moon would spoil the effect. The spot chosen was where three large gum trees were close together facing east.
> They placed saplings against the trees to a height of eight or ten feet and two feet apart and covered them very thickly with boughs which left a fine dark background. They had two large stacks of weed about thirty feet apart ready to light soon as they began to dance. They always dance by firelight and no moon. In those days, with the exception of a loin cloth they are stark naked.
> This is supposed to be a war dance before having a tribal fight. They go to a lot of trouble to paint their bodies with red, white and yellow clay and their bodies and faces were marked and lined off in a very fantastic manner. I may say they had great objection to white women being present, so they were excluded.
> The lubras provided the music for dancing time, some of them having two pieces of flat hard wood, others possum skins rolled into a ball which emitted a peculiar sound while the remainder chanted. The aborigines chanted as they sat in a large circle, each one had a spear fully eight feet long and as there were more than fully one hundred men or more on this occasion they formed an imposing array.
> One of the men stood up and uttered a peculiar chant. The lubras lit the fires and beat time and all the men rose like well drilled units making all sorts of passes with their spears.
> Then the chief gave a signal and they formed themselves into two lines facing each other and linked themselves together with one leg entwined with each other's and then began their weird chanting contortions of the body. They formed squares and circles all the time keeping time with their lubras and the shadows caused by the flickering flames made a fine sight.

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[626] Parsons argues that in the South Australia too 'Aborigines were adroit in accommodating to the settler's market economy, not simply occupying a subservient position in the labour market, but as sellers in a vital market for both tangibles and intangibles, for physical and symbolic goods.' Parsons, "The Tourist Corroboree in South Australia." p.48

> Once more they parted and this time they formed a double circle and went through different evolutions and finished by sitting down, each one placing his spear on his partner's shoulder, a signal for rest. The fires were now replenished and the lubras began to dance, young and old and each had a green bough in her hand.
> Their program was very similar but, among the number, the actions of some of the dancers, more especially the young lubras was very graceful, and as they danced they shook the bough and at the same time singing a low chant, very sweet. They all danced and wound themselves into all kinds of attitudes and finished by forming a line and holding out their hand for anything they could get.
> The spectators had a good two hours enjoyment and all that was required to make these poor aborigines happy was white money, so Mr. Jamieson went round with the hat and distributed the takings among them.[627]

Aboriginal-grown business savvy, which developed rapidly in the economic climate of the goldfields, can best be seen from examining a number of newspaper articles which charted their economic and social empowerment in colonial society.

> On this particular instance the performer, once he had changed his dress, would go round to the visitors and make a strong appeal to each and sundry to give "black fellow a shilling." Some people were silly enough to comply with this demand...The whole scene was one which, once witnessed, is not easily to be forgotten...[628]

Not surprisingly Aboriginal people also chose to perform for non-Indigenous audiences in goldfield venues displaying an entrepreneurial panache which stunned colonial audiences.

> A most novel scene I witnessed at the Royal theatre on Thursday evening. The Ararat tribe of Aborigines [Djabwurrung] has been here for some days, and most pleasing it is to see them so far advanced in civilization. The women have their hair neatly combed and oiled and the men are dressed as Europeans. The King wears a white bell topper, of which he seems as proud as if he wore the Crown of England. An offer was made to them to appear and dance at the Royal, which offer was accepted with avidity. Upon the curtain being raised the dance commenced; and the strict time kept, together with their various steps, completely astonished the audience. After the first piece was over, one of them appeared at the footlights and announced a programme of what would be exhibited before us. In his intelligence and manners he was a pattern to hundreds I have seen of Europeans attempting to address an assemblage. One of

[627] Bishop, Memoirs of George Gregor Bishop.
[628] Ballaarat Times, "A Corroboree."

> them has gone up the country for fifty more, and a grand evening's entertainment is to be given by them at the Royal on Saturday evening next.[629]

In gold mad Melbourne too Aboriginal people in collaboration with theatre managers performed their unique dances at the 'Queen's Theatre' to enthusiastic reviews.

> The main feature in the performances at this theatre for the last two nights has been the introduction of native dances or corroborees, performed by aboriginal natives of this colony. The dances are characteristic, but are not of a kind to be described, consisting for the most part of violent muscular exertion. The "Old Man" corroboree, the "Kangaroo" corroboree, and a third dance, peculiar to the natives of this colony, are the dances selected. The house was well attended on both occasions, many new arrivals conceiving it to be a treat to witness the natural dances of the aborigines.[630]

There is evidence too of both traditional rivalries between distant language groups being relaxed and of Aboriginal people metamorphising the traditional coming together component of corroborees to include a commercial arm to the proceedings, as evidenced by a report of a gathering at Ballarat in March 1861:

> During the last few days a number of aborigines, probably about two hundred have arrived on Ballarat from Port Fairy, Mount Elephant, Mount Cole, the Hopkins, Warrnambool and the Wimmera, for the purpose as they state of seeing the towns and each other...During the whole of Monday they infested the principal parts of the town and levied contributions in money or otherwise on the white man. Towards evening they made preparations for a corroboree in the Copenhagen grounds...and were a considerable time in getting the music to a proper pitch...Steam however was got up at last, and away they went to the intense delight of some 500 persons, who were present to witness the performance...While the dancing was going on King Wattie procured a tin can, and fulfilled the not very dignified position of tax-gatherer in-chief, but up to nine o'clock he did not appear to have been very successful in inducing the invader to acknowledge his right to impose taxes when he liked.[631]

By the mid 1860s there is clear evidence on several goldfields of corroborees being staged in collaboration with non-Indigenous promoters principally as a cultural heritage tourism product for goldfields audiences. In an advertisement (20 February

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[629] Unknown, "Histrionic Aborigines," *Ballarat Star* 21 May 1860. Also reported in: *Ballarat Star*, "Native Theatricals," *Argus* 22 May 1860.
[630] "The Queen's Theartre," *Argus* 3 January 1856.
[631] Unknown, "No Title," *Ballarat Star* 12 March 1861. Also reported in: *Ballarat Star*, "The Natives," *Argus* 14 March 1861.

1865) and subsequent news report of the 'gala' it appears clear that the touristic framing of the event was carefully planned and intended to be an economic initiative which would utilize Aboriginal peoples' heritage as a vehicle for economic self sufficiency.

> **COPENHAGEN GROUNDS**
> Grand Corroboree by Fifty natives
> THIS EVENING, MONDAY, 20th INST.,
> Also, Extra Exhibition of FIREWORKS and Balloon Ascent. For the Benefit of Professor Prescott. Grandest Gala Night of the season[632]
>
> The aboriginal corroboree and display of fireworks at the Copenhagen grounds on Monday evening drew together a large number of persons, and the novel entertainment proved a decided success. Aboriginal habits in their most primitive style were displayed by about thirty-five natives, from various tribes around Ballarat, including about a dozen lubras, who were nearly naked and daubed over with paints of every hue in the most hideous fashion, though no doubt after approved aboriginal style. Without offering any comment upon the propriety or otherwise of the corroboree, it may be stated that it afforded amusement to the number of persons, between five and six hundred, who assembled to witness it. A plentiful supply of coloured fires added to the savage appearance of the scene, and after it was concluded some beautiful fireworks were displayed. Professor Prescott, the lessee of the grounds, purposes on a future evening to allow the natives the use of the grounds for another corroboree, they receiving the proceeds.[633]

At least one other performance, presumably by Wathawurrung people, was co-staged again two years later at the same venue in Ballarat on the 2 April 1867, receiving similar critical accolades:

> A real corroboree of aboriginals took place at the Western cricket Ground last night, under the direction of Professor Prescott, who also added a display of fireworks. There was a very large assemblage of people of all grades and as we overheard one of them remark-"There was a good house, if they all paid." We rather imagine, though, that they did not all pay, there being a decided preponderance of small boys who looked as if their acrobatic agility had stood them for the want of a silver ticket, thereby getting over the fences and barriers without troubling the ticket taker...The affair went off to the satisfaction of the spectators, who were ready enough with applause when any rocket or roman candle of more than usual splendour broke on their vision.[634]

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[632] "Copenhagen Grounds," *Ballarat Star* 20 February 1865.
[633] *Ballarat Star* 21 February 1865.
[634] Unknown, "No Title," *Ballarat Star* 2 April 1867.

This chapter has sought to consider the motive, nature and extent of Aboriginal labour in the service sector[635] and their commercial activity on the goldfields of Victoria. Several key roles that Aboriginal people filled, such as domestics, bark cutting and baby sitting have been examined and it has been demonstrated that when employed in these largely forgotten roles they were considered a valuable asset by gold mining communities. It is equally evident that Aboriginal workers were quick to enter into monetary commerce with non-Indigenous miners, predominately by manufacturing goods essential to gold miners' prime needs such as shelter, warmth, water and food, utilising locally available raw products such as bark, timber and possum skins. This is a significant departure from most historic appraisals of economic intercultural interaction which have emphasized only a barter economy. Moreover it has been demonstrated that Indigenous theatrical cultural products (corroborees, boomerang throwing, demonstrations of weapons etc) jointly negotiated between two cultures were increasingly instigated by Aboriginal people for monetary purposes during the Victorian gold rush period. It needs to be emphasized however that the swiftness with which Aboriginal people adopted and adapted the Western economic model of commerce can be observed to have operated within the cultural parameters of traditional Aboriginal reciprocity and kinship. It is apparent that the two economic models have been shown to be more convergent than previously thought. It has also been revealed that non-Indigenous mining communities were eager to appropriate and

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[635] Alfred Joyce, a pastoralist in the Central Highlands of Victoria noted the employment of Aboriginal people as posties during the gold rush period. This is corroborated by goldfield's artist, ST Gill, whose artwork 'The Bush Postman' portrays the scene described in writing by Joyce. GF James, ed., A Homestead History - Being the Reminiscences and Letters of Alfred Joyce of Plaistow and Norwood, Port Phillip 1843 to 1864 (Melbourne: OUP, 1969). p.91. Two 'Blacks' were also employed as posties in the Yea district. Cited in Blanks, The Story of Yea. p.72. In the Orbost district Jack McLeod, an Aboriginal man carried 'mail for the Orbost and Corringie Stations' And also in the Snowy River district. Samuel Richards cited in Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District. pp.8,27. Cluuterbuck also affirmed their usefulness as posties , as they were 'most faithful messengers'. Clutterbuck, Diary. p.41

to commodify Aboriginal material technology and Aboriginal cultural heritage to a degree hitherto rarely considered. The following chapter further explores the nature and degree of transmogrification or indigenisation by the dominant society of elements of both Aboriginal material and intellectual culture.

CHAPTER SEVEN: INDIGENISATION

A deliberate focus of this study is to discern the significance of Aboriginal input to the Victorian gold story. A major aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that non-Indigenous mining communities did indeed acculturate elements of Aboriginal culture in the study period. By chronicling the extent the dominant culture appropriated elements of Aboriginal culture, I intend to challenge the notion posited by many historians either explicitly, or implicitly by their failure to address the topic, that non-Indigenous people had 'nothing to learn from Aboriginal people.'[636] It shall be demonstrated that there was a robust embracing on some goldfields of certain elements of material and intellectual Indigenous culture which lays bare evidence of a significant degree of living together. This is a dynamic rarely explored by historians or writers examining the formation of the 'Australian legend' yet has significant implications in any discussion about the roots of Victorian goldfields society and of Australian culture.

Appropriation, adaptation or some accommodation of elements of Aboriginal material and cultural items into the dominant non-Indigenous culture was certainly occurring in the pastoral period and it seems evident that this continued in the gold period.[637] Across the gold frontier, miners observed, adopted and adapted a montage of

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[636] R Broome, Arriving, The Victorians (Sydney: Fairfax, 1984).

[637] Frank Burchett noted how they now used 'the blacks canoes' to ford swollen rivers. Burchett, Letters. Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye expressed great pleasure in the opportunity to purchase many Aboriginal artifacts including some 'very pretty baskets, opossum skins which were well preserved, handsome and serviceable and kangaroo skins' in Ramsay-Laye, Social Life and Manners in Australia. p.60. James Sinclair noted several non-Indigenous stockmen who 'had on possum skin caps' in Sinclair, Memoirs.; Thomas Woolner noted his keenness to make a tobacco pouch form an 'opossum skin' in Woolner, Diary. For further discussion on this topic see: Cahir, "Dallong - Possum Skin Rugs: A Study of an Intercultural Trade Item in Victoria."

Aboriginal culture.[638] According to James Nisbet, a gold miner at Ballarat in 1853, the non-Indigenous miners had appropriated the Aboriginal method of communicating to one another, noting that 'Many of the diggers had learned their strange coo-ee and made the woods sing with it, as signals to their mates.'[639] The Reverend Arthur Polehampton, a miner also at Ballarat, confirmed Nisbet's opinion of the universality of the *coo-ee* amongst miners, noting 'I had not been very long settled indoors when I heard a coo-ee, a peculiar call of the blacks imitated by the colonists to which I replied in like manner.'[640] De Castella confirmed this appropriation, adding that the '*cooee* is the colonial shout, the rallying or distress signal in the bush' and also noted its usefulness 'it is a lengthened shout ending in a sharp note which can be heard from a great distance.'[641] It was food, however, that proved to be the most potent intrinsic motivation for non-Indigenous miners to explore, adapt and adopt parts of Aboriginal culture.

BUSHFOODS

The exorbitantly high prices food fetched during the initial alluvial gold rush period proved to be a strong incentive for the majority of miners to try their palates on what has become known as 'bush food'. This subject naturally preoccupies the historical records of people on the goldfields, at times revealing a mild or keen curiosity, and at other times a reliance to relieve both the economic burden and the dreary monotony of

[638] AA Le Souef noted that Aboriginal people had 'warned white people of their danger [building close to a river] and pointed out logs that had been left in the trees far above where their houses were being erected'. Le Souef, Personal Recollections of Early Victoria.
[639] Nisbet, Articles.
[640] Polehampton, Kangaroo Land. p.254
[641] Castella, Australian Squatters. p.149

Colonial fare.[642] There was also occasionally a dependence on receiving tutelage in Aboriginal foods and craft.[643] For example, Lord Robert Cecil, who made a visit to the Kyneton diggings in 1852, recalled how the diggers at Specimen Gully "showed me what the natives call 'blackfellows sugar.' It is a species of manna falling plentifully from the white gum. It tastes very much like the second layer in a wedding cake."[644] Some miners of course were not at all adventurous, such as JJ Bond who was the recipient of a bushfood sampling offer at Benalla in 1854:

> They are very fond of a very large grub that they discover in the rough bark of the honeysuckle tree, a Lubra brought me some one day as a rare delicacy they had been slightly roasted. I politely declined the treat and begged her to eat them for me which she did forthwith one after the other with great relish.[645]

A substantial number of people on the goldfields, however, eagerly exploited the bush food bounty that they witnessed the Aboriginal people utilizing[646] such as John Chandler who noted 'great heaps of land mussel shells, which the natives had been getting out of the lagoons for years. We got some and boiled them in a bucket. They were very good with some salt.'[647] AB Pierce, on a journey along the Murray River, stated his intention to 'get most of my supplies from the settlements and native camps along the shores' and later added 'Delicious eggs of the wild geese, ducks and other

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[642] AB Pierce was delighted with an 'excellent meal of kangaroo haunch and jugged hare' rather than the dreary fare of mutton at a local inn near Ravenswood, Victoria. See: Leatherbee, ed., Knocking About: Being Some Adventures of Augustus Baker Pierce in Australia. p.37

[643] Katherine McK wrote of her childhood experiences gathering bushtuckers (native cherries and wildflower nectar) and commented that in 'earlier times than ours [we] learned from the blacks what to taste and what to leave untouched in the bush wilds. McK, Old Days and Gold Days. pp.78-9. Similarly, A Batey learnt about the procuring of possums, myrniong daisy (yams) and a host of other bush lore. See: Batey, Reminiscences.

[644] R Salisbury, Lord Robert Cecil's Gold Fields Diary (Melbourne: MUP, 1935). See also: Polehampton, Kangaroo Land. p.71 and 'Anonymous', an American digger at Ballarat who noted that 'as we traveled on we were reminded of the journeyings of the Israelites of old by finding the ground strewed with manna. It was white and sweet.' Anonymous, Gold Rush Narrative, NLA MS, Canberra.

[645] Bond, Memoirs. pp.74-5

[646] Woolner 'gathered some native cherries; not bad...white gum trees are dropping their manna now, luscious morsels with the flavour of almonds.' Woolner, Diary.

[647] Cannon, ed., Forty Years in the Wilderness. p.101

native birds were plentifully supplied by the natives in exchange for small quantities of flour and tobacco.'[648] John Chapple and his party at the Avoca goldfields had splendid repasts of 'stewed turkey and native apples for dinner' and on another occasion '2 baskets of cockels'.[649] One visitor to Ballarat noted the prolific amount of fauna, consumed by Aboriginal and non-Indigenous alike.

> The country for many miles around on all sides was one vast forest, with many open glades...one bird [Bustard] now very scarce in Europe are of gigantic size and of most delicate flesh may be found in large flocks [and are] frequently shot by the natives...miniature kangaroos abound in the ferns but are fast disappearing in the face of civilization...a native cat with pointed nose resembling a ferret, opossums, eels...[650]

John Rochford, a surveyor on the goldfields of Victoria, spoke of an 'immense slaughter amongst the opossums, pigeons, parrots and quails which formed our Sunday dinner.'[651] The repertoire of bush foods consumed by non-Indigenous miners was sizeable, including the perennial favorite duo of parrots and cockatoos (often baked into pies), kangaroo, wallaby, wombat, ant eggs, pigeon, parakeets, magpies, bandicoot, wattlebirds, quail, eels, native fish, dingo and possum. Occasionally echidna, 'jackass pie' (kookaburra) and other wild fowl were placed in the billy.'[652] James Peverell, a miner at Forrest Creek secured a bandicoot and considered it not

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[648] Leatherbee, ed., Knocking About: Being Some Adventures of Augustus Baker Pierce in Australia. p.56-62. Live birds and other native animals were regularly 'obtained from the blacks' for sale as pets to non-Indigenous people. See; PL Brown, ed., Clyde Company Papers Volumes 1-5 (London: OUP, 1971). p.165

[649] Chapple, Diary.

[650] J Ewes, China, Australia and the Pacific Islands, in the Years 1853-56 (London: Richard Bentley, 1857). Chapter 3. JS prout expessed very similar sentiments about the Mt Macedon district. Prout, An Illustrated Handbook of the Voyage to Australia. p.20

[651] J Rochford, The Adventures of a Surveyor in New Zealand and Australia (London: David Bogue, 1853). p.68

[652] G Annison, Diary, NLA MS, Canberra. p.7. CB Hall considered that 'about the Grampians, game was most plentiful...and kangaroo-tail soup, in its abundance, ceased to have any attraction for us.' Cited in:Halls Gap & Grampians Historical Society, Victoria's Wonderland. p.5. W Blandowski tasted ant eggs and thought 'they resemble sago' and wombat was very much like veal. Blandowski, Personal Observations in the Central Parts of Victoria. Oliver Ragless' party of miners considered the 'best dinner consisted of cockatoos, parrot and rice all boiled in the long pot'. Ragless, ed., Oliver's Diary: An 'Andkerchief of Eirth. p.23

'too bad for hungry men.'[653] James Selby, a miner also on Djadjawurrung land 'amused himself in the evening fishing for crayfish and killed several possums which we consumed.'[654] Travellers in Victoria such as William Howitt reported that but a little distance away from the goldfields there was ample opportunity to 'enjoy the pleasures of hunting and fishing' and also recorded being plied with bush foods by Aboriginal people.[655] Examples of this reportage would include De Castella who observed that 'It is they who provide us with ducks and fish' and on another occasion reiterated the boon provided for them when the 'blacks came back [to the whites camp] every evening laden with duck and bustard eggs'[656] in a similar vein Korzelinski noted 'on our request for fish [an Aboriginal person] just dived into the [Broken] river and soon came out with a tasty foot-long fish.'[657] Others such as William Howitt observed that on the banks of the Campaspe River there were: 'a number of natives fishing here, who had caught a good quantity of the river cod, and had learned to ask a good price for it', adding with a note of annoyance 'another consequence of the diggings.'[658] A number of correspondents confirmed Howitt's observation about Aboriginal people not merely trading bush foods for trifles but actively striking up money transactions for the goods they sold to non-Indigenous miners and storekeepers.[659] An example of this cross cultural commerce is evinced in

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[653] J Peverell, Reminiscences, RHSV, Melbourne. p.12

[654] Selby, Diary and Papers. p.29

[655] Correspondents for *The Illustrated Australian News* in 1869 and 1872 described how: 'The Murray cod is a noble fish, highly prized by Australians...preferred by some to the English salmon...the fishing ground which supplies the Victorian market and scattered families of aborigines are to be found in close proximity on the banks of the Murray and the shores of the Lakes...entrapping the inhabitants of the waters.' Quoted in G Hibbins, Barmah Chronicles (Lynedoch: Lynedoch Publications, 1991). p.30

[656] Castella, Australian Squatters. pp.72-130

[657] Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. p.78. At the Loddon River Oliver Ragless related how 'The natives told me there were fish in the waterhole; a boy caught one about 2 lbs in weight.' Ragless, ed., Oliver's Diary: An 'Andkerchief of Eirth. p.30

[658] Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold. p.275

[659] In the 1860s, there were reports of Aboriginal people fishing for eels at the headwaters of Deep Creek. Reid, When Memory Turns the Key: A History of the Shire of Romsey. p.2 and also at Tooradin they 'used to shoot ducks and catch eels and sell them to buy drink; food they would cadge.'

the *Inglewood Advertiser*, (November 1861): 'Mr. Roff the greengrocer had 40 brace of wild ducks, which he sold at two shillings per brace. He had also a mallee hen and several of the eggs of that remarkable bird...They were got from the natives, about forty miles from this place'.[660] This report is corroborated by a correspondent in *The Argus* writing in reference to the 'Act to provide for the preservation of Native Game', who considered that if the Act should also apply 'to the blacks great good would ensue, and without any corresponding hardship to them, for they take large numbers of emus' eggs, not for food, but simply to sell.'[661] AB Pierce felt fortunate that his party 'purchased from them ['a party of blacks'] a large fish of some seven pounds, of a species which resembles the American hornpout and tastes like an eel.'[662] Aboriginal people, JD Mereweather discovered, actively hawked their wares with a great sense of business acumen. Mereweather was 'asked to buy some delicate fishes, which were most artistically arranged in leaves, and bound together with osier twigs. These blacks seem an intelligent fine race, and calculate acutely the value of everything of which they have to dispose.'[663] The Murray Fishing Company, one of the largest fishing companies (established in 1859) benefited greatly from the skills and expertise of their Aboriginal employees who according to Joseph Westwood, a visitor to the Company's huts, observed how the 'fishermen reside; surrounded with a number of blacks, from infancy to old age'.[664] The *Pastoral Times* confirmed that very good relations existed between Aboriginal fishermen and the Murray Fishing

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Korumburra and District Historical Society, The Land of the Lyrebird (Korumburra: Korumburra and District Historical Society, 1988). p.380. Eeeling using traditional weirs and baskets was recorded on the Hopkins River in the 1860s. see: Polehampton, Kangaroo Land. p.260

[660] I Clark, "Djadjawurrung," Burrabungle, Mt Korong, ed. Korong Historical Society (Wedderburn: Korong Historical Society, 1988).p.45

[661] See also reference to amendment to 'Victorian Fisheries Bill' in 1870 for the benefit of Aboriginal people to catch any fish for their own purposes.

[662] Leatherbee, ed., Knocking About: Being Some Adventures of Augustus Baker Pierce in Australia. p.138

[663] Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. p.201

[664] Westwood, Journal of Jj Westwood Being an Account of Eight Years Itinerary to the Townships and Squatting Stations of Victoria. p.401

Company who were supplying all the Melbourne and Sandhurst [Bendigo] markets, noting that the Company was 'Correct in all their dealings, keeping faith even with the poor Aboriginals whom they are obliged to employ in the novel occupation of fishing on a large scale in fresh water.'[665]

The ineptitude of many non-Indigenous miners in their quest for bush foods (such as John Chapple who 'tried night and morning for some game but could only get a teal'[666]) stifled their enthusiasm at times. Howitt also acknowledged with some reticence that they lacked the necessary skills possessed by Aboriginal people to bring down the game they sought.

> The plains abound with wild turkeys; but they truly were wild, for a gathering of various tribes had lately been there, and they had been hunting them; and though Alfred and Lignum pursued them with unwearied artifice and diligence, they could not succeed in killing a single one. Emus are sometimes seen in considerable numbers; but they had fled before the natives. The ducks flew in flocks of thousands; but as there was no cover on the banks of the lake, they would not allow you to come within shot of them, and we were obliged to content ourselves with a teal and diver or two.[667]

According to Elizabeth Ramsay Laye, a resident of Avoca in central Victoria, the social life of the new immigrants to Victoria[668] often included enjoying delicious dinners of game including 'wild turkey or bustard, weighing twenty-five pounds'. She considered Aboriginal culture in an appreciative manner, choosing to remain 'not far from the native encampment, and there we learned a good deal of the natives and their habits.' Laye was also privy to Aboriginal tutelage in the hunting, preparation, cooking and tasting of possum.

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[665] Quoted from the *Pastoral Times*, 26 July 1862. Cited in: Hibbins, Barmah Chronicles. p.34
[666] Chapple, Diary.
[667] Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold. p.89
[668] Miner, William Hall noted the shooting and eating of wild turkeys, 17 pounds in weight. W Hall, Practical Experience at the Diggings of the Gold Fields (London: Effingham, 1852). p.15

> We watched one of the natives climb a tall gum tree by cutting steps for himself in the trunk with his tomahawk as he went up. Chopping a hollow branch in two, he threw down an opossum which was in it to his *lubra* (wife), who instantly prepared and roasted it for us to taste. It was very tough, and had a disagreeable flavour...[669]

Others such as Caleb Collyer considered that 'the making of damper was a test of skill and the best I have seen made and have made was made and baked by aborigines.'[670] Similarly, other miners such as JM Smith acknowledged the superior culinary methods Aboriginal people employed when cooking possums.

> I skinned and gutted him [possum], toasted him that evening on the ashes and found him very fair feeding but rather gummy. Hunger was a good sauce and he went down slick. The aborigines do not skin them, but get some stiff clay which they carefully roll over the entire possum, then make a hole in the hot ashes and cover him up. When the clay becomes hard they break it; the skin and fur adheres to the clay and the animal comes out as clean, white and tender as a chicken, and with the above mentioned sauce, makes a good meal.[671]

Charles Fead echoed Smith's appraisal, noting they would: 'simply throw the animal on the fire and, after a while, peel off the cake of burnt skin and hair, at which stage – but not beyond it – the meat would often look delicious and appetizing.'[672] Most observers of Aboriginal culinary skills echoed De Castella's assessment who commented that their eel cooking methods whilst 'very ugly to look at' produced 'very good eating as long as one does not have too many prejudices.'[673] Samuel Mossman and Thomas Bannister thought very highly of Aboriginal cooking prowess, exclaiming that 'The fact is, the *chef de cuisine* at the Mansion House might add a

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[669] Ramsay-Laye, Social Life and Manners in Australia. pp.58-9
[670] C Collyer, Reminiscences, RHSV MS, Melbourne. p.31
[671] Cuffley, ed., Send the Boy to Sea: The Memoirs of a Sailor on the Goldfields by James Montagu Smith. p.195
[672] Fead, "Notes of an Unsettled Life." p.27
[673] Castella, Australian Squatters.p.74. Also see: James Goonan noted of possum cooking by Aboriginals that it 'savoured as palatable as any modern roast of beef.' Ronan, ed., Early Dederang 1854-1956 from the Notebook of Micheal James Goonan. p.10

recipe or two worth knowing to his cookery book from these natural gourmands.'[674] There were advocates, such as William Westgarth, who thought it feasible that the processing of Indigenous foods for the world market be considered as: 'The massive [kangaroo] tail is still esteemed a delicacy when made into soup, and a rival of the famed ox-tail. The future trade of Australia may comprise this fancy article of food.'[675]

MIA MIAS

Indigenous vocabulary such as *mia mia, willam, gunyah* (various spellings), denoting housing or shelter was commonly used by miners[676] when referring to their own temporary huts. Such vocabulary entered the vernacular of the day.[677] Frances Perry, a visitor to Buangor, central Victoria, in April 1852 described the familiarity which non-Indigenous people had of the name and structure of traditional Aboriginal housing:

> We took a walk amongst the wooded hills, and came upon the largest (deserted) native encampment we had ever seen. One of the Mia Mias (you know what that

[674] Mossman and Bannister, Australia, Visited and Revisited. p.295. Robins in Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. p.222. AA Le Souef was dependent upon Tommy bull, an Aboriginal guide on his trek with stock for the Ovens goldfields when their provisions 'gave out' and noted 'I may say that a young opossum is not to be despised by hungry men.' Le Souef, Personal Recollections of Early Victoria.

[675] Westgarth, Victoria and the Australian Gold Mines in 1857.

[676] The term mia mia was also adopted by pastoralists in an earlier era of occupation by non-Indigenous people on Aboriginal land, such as CB Hall in the Grampians-Gariwerd region who built himself a 'reed mia mia' by the banks of the Mt William Creek in 1840. Cited in: Halls Gap & Grampians Historical Society, Victoria's Wonderland. p.3

[677] Henry Gray, like many miners wrote to relatives describing the 'blacks mia mias' in some detail. Gray, Letters. Police Magistrate, Eveleigh Johns repeatedly refers to his *mia mi* in his correspondence. Johns, Papers. Ramsay-Laye, Social Life and Manners in Australia. Willaim Strutt reflected in his autobiography how 'we erected a mia mia for shelter' whilst on his journey to Ballarat in Strutt, Off to Australia.Several references such as 'women's mia mia' and 'our mia', relating to non-Indigenous miners appears in Map Depicting the Discovery of Bendigo Goldfields.; We lived in a bark gunyah with three bunks in it – a bunk being simply a sheet of bark laid on four posts with a possum rug for blankets. S MacDonald, The Member for Mt Ida, NLA MS, Canberra.

> is by this time – the a is not sounded) was as large as an ordinary-sized circular summer-house, and actually had rude seats all round, which is quite unusual.'[678]

The Government Geologist, Alfred Selwyn, also used the term with a great deal of familiarity when discussing his journey to the Dandenong fields: 'Mr. Daintree and I have had many a hard day's work in penetrating it, whilst at night like blackfellows, we built a mia mia, and rolled ourselves in our opossum rugs.'[679] Many miners concurred with Selwyn and Daintree about the suitability of constructing mia mias for short-term camps as they observed and admired Aboriginal expertise in quickly and adeptly constructing shelters which served their stated purpose.[680] One visitor to the goldfields explained the economic and functional rationale of copying Aboriginal shelters at the Ballarat diggings:

> We had determined to remain in Ballarat for a few days as we could not afford speculating in deep sinking. We could not afford to remain longer looking for employment in a place where all necessities were so terribly dear. We lived in a sort of hut built of branches and bark, not unlike the mia mia of the blacks. The weather being warm and dry it was quite a sufficient shelter.[681]

German miner and artist on the Ballarat diggings Eugene Von Guerard, was, like many of the 300,000 miners that flocked from around the world, to try their luck on the Victorian diggings in the 1850s. His 'Journal of an Australian Gold Digger' is somewhat typical of many educated miners' writings on his experiences as a 'new chum' to colonial Australia, and in particular, the diggings of Victoria. After a long voyage of over four months, he joined a company of fourteen men and one woman on what, by December 1853, was a well worn journey from Geelong to the diggings at Ballarat. Like many of his fellow sojourners, Von Guerard was quickly impressed by the different countryside and ethnic potpourri that was colonial Victoria, noting three

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[678] A Robin, ed., Australian Sketches: The Journals and Letters of Frances Perry (Melbourne: Queensberry Hill Press, 1984). p.167
[679] A Selwyn, "The Dandenong Goldfield," *Argus* 17 February 1859.
[680] Prout, An Illustrated Handbook of the Voyage to Australia. p.21-2
[681] Polehampton, Kangaroo Land. p.226

days after disembarking at Geelong: 'Our first experience of an Australian dust storm. Most horrible...Saw a number aborigines, both men and women, some clad in opossum rugs and others in European attire. Also some Chinamen. Met two Frenchmen...'[682] Von Guerard journeyed in January 1853 from Geelong to the Eureka diggings at Ballarat, along the way noting and painting a picture of Wathawurrung shelters. Though Von Guerard had been in the Antipodes less than a fortnight, he was conversant with the Indigenous name for temporary camp shelters, writing in his journal near the village of Batesford that he passed:

> three or four mia –mias, the abode of some eight or ten aborigines. In front of each burned a little fire, and some spears lay at hand. The mia-mias are made of the branches of trees in the form of half an open umbrella of large dimensions. Some were covered with the skins of animals[683]

A journal entry dated 24 September 1853 reveals that his memory of the Wathawurrung's 'mia-mias' had not grown dim as he described how a great number of miners at Golden Point (Ballarat) had appropriated local Indigenous modes of shelter, similar to the ones he had seen earlier that year: 'Besides a vast number of tents, many diggers are contenting themselves with a kind of mia-mia, simply made of green branches, to sleep under at night.'[684] Miners such as JG Smith, hard up on their luck at the Ballarat district diggings with only a few shillings left to their names opted to 'live in a Mia Mia for several weeks'.[685] Travel writer, William Howitt, explicitly noted the gold miners had copied Aboriginal methods of building shelters and that at Spring Creek there are 'huts of mingled boughs and sheets of bark; and here and there

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[682] 31 December, 1852. Quoted in Rich, ed., Eugene Von Guerard in Ballarat: Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by Eugene Von Guerard.
[683] 11 January, 1853 in Rich, ed., Eugene Von Guerard in Ballarat: Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by Eugene Von Guerard.
[684] 24 September, 1853 in Rich, ed., Eugene Von Guerard in Ballarat: Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by Eugene Von Guerard.
[685] Smith, Reminiscences of the Ballarat Goldfield. p.23

simple mimies, in imitation of the mimi of the natives, that is, just a few boughs leaned against a pole, supported by a couple of forked sticks, and a quantity of gum-tree leaves for a bed.'[686]

This chapter has examined how sections of the non-Indigenous mining community embraced elements of both the material and non-material Aboriginal culture. The ideological shift adopted by non-Indigenous people towards being indigenised – in language, shelter, clothing and a sense of belonging - was certainly present but it was in the subject of indigenous foods that non-Indigenous people demonstrated the greatest willingness to explore and exploit the mutual benefits of inter-racial amity and subsequent sense of indigenisation. A significant minority of the non-Indigenous mining community, far from believing they had nothing to learn from Aboriginal people, sought to appropriate certain elements of Indigenous knowledge and cultural materials from the Aboriginal people they encountered. The most compelling reason it has been demonstrated for the non-Indigenous mining community to become more indigenised was to survive and thrive in the bush physically, economically and socially but there was a genuine affection on the part of some non-Indigenous miners for the forming of a new 'Australia' to which they felt they were contributing. Arguably there was a degree of unconscious acculturation which occurred, that partly at least invoked the linking of Indigenous material and non-material culture to belonging in a new land and a new society. Many miners' accounts and family reminiscences referring to Aboriginal people on the goldfields often expressed their attitudes in language that evoked duality. It is indisputable that there was great disparagement of Aboriginal people and their culture, but there was a degree of accommodation. This is a theme explored further in the following chapter.

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[686] Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold. p.139

CHAPTER EIGHT: CO-HABITATION

This chapter shall outline the mutually binding relationships that developed between some non-Indigenous people and Victorian Aboriginal people especially on the goldfields. Conversely, it shall also be demonstrated that the process of living between two cultures was not a homogenous one across Aboriginal Victoria. Some Aboriginal people acculturated some elements of non-Indigenous socio-economic lifestyles whilst seeking to assimilate non-Indigenous people into Aboriginal cultural networks through exchange of wives, giving of names, child minding and gift giving whilst others more actively chose directly to assimilate non-Indigenous cultural examples. Acculturation in this study refers to the processes by which individuals, families, communities, and societies react to inter-cultural contact with non-Indigenous communities. Acculturation on the goldfields involved different levels of destruction, survival, domination, resistance, modification, and adaptation of Aboriginal cultures following contact with non-Indigenous gold-mining communities.

The literature on acculturation theory is extensive but the literature on transmogrification or the borrowing of cultural elements by a dominant culture (especially in a nineteenth century Victoria framework) from a 'native' culture is still in its primary stages.[687] Traditional conceptualizations of acculturation according to

[687] F Rudwin, for example has compiled an extensive bibliography of treatises on acculturation theory. Discussion about acculturation, he states date back to Plato. See: F Rudmin, "Catalogue of Acculturation Constructs: Descriptions of 126 Taxonomies, 1918-2003," On-Line Readings, ed. WJ Lonner (Washington: West Washington University: Centre for Cross Cultural Research, 2003). By way of contrast Clark is one of the few scholars to have examined an example of the dominant colonialist culture adopting cultural aspects of Victorian Aboriginal people. Clark has described how some non-Indigenous pastoralists and others adopted the Victorian Aboriginal custom of 'ngamadjidj'. See: Clark, "Understanding the Enemy - Ngamadjidj or Foreign Invader? Aboriginal Perceptions of Europeans in 19th Century Western Victoria."

FW Rudmin[688] have taken a uni-dimensional approach contending that individuals must lose cultural characteristic to gain characteristics from other cultural groups for cultural and social adaptation. Ethnologist J Berry contends that:

> contemporary conceptualizations take a multidimensional approach that place both cultures on different continuums indicating an individual's ability to maintain their culture of origin while adopting characteristics from other groups deemed appropriate for cultural adaptation.[689]

Berry's conceptualisation of acculturation is seen to be useful in our understanding of Aboriginal individual, family, clan and language group acculturation which he argues occurs at different levels (assimilation, marginalization, separation, and integration).[690]

Historical records relating to the alluvial gold mining period, predominately from the 1850s, implicitly convey a co-habitation approximating that which historian Jan Critchett has demonstrated occurred in the Western District of Victoria in the period 1834-48.[691] There are corollaries between Critchett's summation of the state of inter-racial relations during the pastoral period and the alluvial mining period. All across Victoria's gold mining districts Aboriginal men, women and children came into contact with non-Indigenous men and a few women and children and made determinations about maintaining cultural characteristics and the degree of contact needed with dominant group members to obtain a suitable means of adaptation. What was unusual was the degree of close contact between the races, a contact that varied from friendliness to outright hostility from one mining gully to the next. Relationships

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[688] Rudmin, "Catalogue of Acculturation Constructs: Descriptions of 126 Taxonomies, 1918-2003."
[689] Berry in Rudmin, "Catalogue of Acculturation Constructs: Descriptions of 126 Taxonomies, 1918-2003."
[690] Berry in: Rudmin, "Catalogue of Acculturation Constructs: Descriptions of 126 Taxonomies, 1918-2003."
[691] Critchett, A Distant Field of Murder; Western District Frontiers 1834-1888.

were complex, varying not only geographically but rapidly changing over time as one rush was superseded by another rush and extremely large non-homogenous and transient populations waxed and waned across the region.

Intriguingly, miner William Nawton's solitary reference to "Gurra Gurra" – the native name for dysentery'[692] in his diary (1852-3) from Fryers Creek in central Victoria, might indicate that miners were interacting with the Djadjawurrung far more closely than has commonly been assumed. Where did Nawton acquire this knowledge? It was certainly not a common word, not being found in any other manuscript looked at to date. There is one other very brief entry in his diary which might allude to a greater deal of fraternity with Djadjawurrung people.

In the Faulkner family history chronicles, there is a tale of positive and negative memories of Aboriginal people on the Ovens goldfields which arguably is a reflection of many miners' and Aboriginal people's opinions of each other: 'The Aborigines [in the Bright region], who were numerous at that time [1852-3], had not molested Ellen. William [Ellen's husband], however, had been taken by them [?], but become their friend after 'saving' the life of one of their important men with a swig of brandy and some food.'[693] James Dannock, also a miner on various goldfields in Victoria, acted as interpreter for his mates and revealed in his diary that when very ill from dysentery, he had not only sought and applied the medicinal remedies of the 'black lubras', but had also readily accepted their dire prognosis and acted accordingly.

> I took bad with the dysentery & the black lubras get [illegible] me wattle gum & when I did not get better they said 2 days that fellow go bung so I thought I had

[692] Nawton, Diary.
[693] B Lloyd, Bright Gold (Brighton: Histec Publications, 1987). p.13

> better clear out & got the blacks to put me over the river in a canoe I lyed aside the track & and waited for the mail coach & got on to Swan Hill.[694]

George Rowe, a miner at Bendigo and Castlemaine diggings was also conversant with Aboriginal [Djadjawurrung] medicines for dysentery, noting that the 'wattle gums give off a great deal of gum which is very similar to gum Arabic and good as medicine for the dysentery so is the decoction from the bark.'[695]

Others such as George Sugden who had lived in the bush for most of his life prior to the rushes and 'could understand and talk with the blacks' recalled their encounters with more fondness[696]: 'Blacks were at that time [ca.1852] plentiful and I met a lot of them [enroute to Pleasant Creek Hospital]. I would talk to them and show them my [injured] hand they were kind to me.'[697] JD Mereweather, an itinerant preacher near the Murray River, holed up by flood waters and forced to 'ensconce ourselves' amongst the sleeping Aboriginals, was the recipient of their generosity that reminded him of a New Testament parable: 'The tribe were half starved; the return of the men was looked for with impatience; this poor creature was half famished, and yet she frankly and freely offered me, a stranger, her mite – all that she had, whatever it was, and was very chagrined that I took it not.'[698]

In the more remote districts of Victoria co-dependent relationships were very common, and benefited both peoples as evidenced by reminiscences of women caring for each other's children, mutual caring for the land by effectively acting as park

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[694] Dannock`, Autobiography.
[695] Rowe, Correspondence.
[696] At Dandenong (c.1860s) an Aboriginal man named Jimmy having been stabbed seriously in the buttock was stitched up by a Mr and Mrs Dunbar. The story was told that Jimmy became 'rather a nuisance, wanting his wound dressed too frequently – because of the generosity of his benefactress most likely.'. Cited in Roulston, Reminiscences of History of Early Dandenong. p.27
[697] Sugden, Pioneering Life in Outback Stations of Victoria. pp.46-7
[698] Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. p.192

rangers, the exchanging of foods when lean times struck individual families, cross-cultural medical advice and sharing of bush lore.[699] These exchanges sometimes led to long-forming relationships and appreciation of each other's cultural perspective passed down via oral history to present day. In the northern states of Australia these types of pioneering co-relationships have been enshrined in historical folklore, yet in Victoria it has largely remained the preserve of family history, and has not yet pervaded our general social and economic histories.[700]

The almost universal cultural belief amongst Victorian Aboriginal people of claiming certain non-Indigenous people as resuscitated clanspeople was also prevalent during the gold rush period.[701] Charles Fead, a miner on the Gippsland fields, recounted in his 'Notes of an Unsettled Life' that some Aboriginal people had paternal feelings for individuals whom they recognized as resuscitated clanspeople:

> Traveling down the long sloping track which led to the diggings, I overtook Metoaka, King of the Omeo Blacks, returning from hunting. He was a frank, manly old fellow, much liked by the whites, over whom he claimed some sort of sovereignty as well, and welcomed me as one of his former subjects.[702]

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[699] See: J Carmody, Early Days of the Upper Murray (Wangaratta: Shoestring Press, 1981).;McGivern, Big Camp Wahgunyah: History of the Rutherglen District. for a number of illustrative examples whereupon non-Indigenous families and a local clan led close co-dependent relationships.

[700] Often in Victorian regional history publications the non-Indigenous memories of Aboriginal people are reduced to activities such as 'begging' and 'doing some work' According to reminiscences published by the Mortlake Historical Society for example, Aboriginal women in the township of Mortlake 'often waited outside the school to see if some of the children had saved part of their lunch for them.' Mortlake Historical Society, Pastures of Peace (Mortlake: Mortlake Shire, 1985). pp.56-7. Pastoralist journals often contradict this monochromatic memory. For more discussion on this point see chapter on 'Aboriginal people off the goldfields'.

[701] Samuel Clutterbuck recounted several instances of Aboriginal people instructing him on this subject: 'I told him of poor Wight's death. Aha! Said he [Murray, an Aboriginal] "Mr Wight, quamby alonga this, (pointing to ground) come up black fellow, bye and bye." This is their tradition of the final state of white men and vice versa of their own people'. Clutterbuck, Diary. pp.39-40. For more discussion on this phenomenon see: Clark, "Understanding the Enemy - Ngmmadjidj or Foreign Invader? Aboriginal Perceptions of Europeans in 19th Century Western Victoria."

[702] Fead, "Notes of an Unsettled Life." p.34

Often the newly appointed 'brother' or 'child' did not understand the relationship and commitments that were being invoked but treated it as a friendly nicety to be humoured.[703] Edward Hiscock, the son of Thomas Hiscock, official discoverer of the first gold in the Ballarat region, was recognized by a Wathawurrung woman to be her resuscitated child. 'One old lubra named Sarah, who was much attached to Mrs. T Hiscock when she saw Edward Thomas about, said that he was her long lost piccinanny, who had died. She said that he had "fallen down blackfellow and jump up white fellow."[704] This understated response from the new wave of colonizers in the gold period is particularly evident in Hubert De Castella's conversation with an unidentified Aboriginal man: "You are my brother long time dead', one of the old men used to say to me with a sort of respectful friendliness. Poor blacks, that is what they now believe. They say sadly, like the savages of America used to: "White fellow come, black fellows all gone', but as if to console themselves they add: 'Bye and bye all black fellows white men'.[705] A small number of white miners however recognized the level of importance that Aboriginal people placed on forming relationships with individuals and maintaining links with their land and subsequently reaping the benefits.

> As their services are given more from goodwill than from hope of reward, it is only from attachment to persons with whom they are well acquainted that they are ever prevailed upon to lend themselves as parties in an exploring expedition...Old Bill Cowpers never seemed to move from the place where he first commenced. Perhaps it was very inconvenient for him to shift, as he had an aboriginal woman living with him, which might be a potent reason for his always remaining at one place...washing with the assistance of the aboriginal

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[703] Struilby related a story of an unidentified Aboriginal clan who believed a whiteman who arrived in the vicinity with the same peculiar bent arm as one of their deceased to be 'a blackfellow jumped up white fellow'. The clan subsequently 'would do anything for him and...carried tons of split timber and bark to build his huts, &c.' See: Graham, ed., Observations and Experiences During 25 Years of Bush Life in Australia. p.142

[704] GJ Hiscock, Descendants of Thomas Hiscock, Geneological Records, Geneological record of Thomas Hiscock, Pioneer and Gold Discoverer, Buninyong.

[705] Castella, Australian Squatters. p.73

> woman...when he came upon a rich spot he had got six hundred pounds' worth, [which] would keep his gin a long time.[706]

Most non-Indigenous people did not discern the full implications of the resuscitated kin relationship but assumed that Aboriginal people were 'honouring' them. Typical of this response is located in the diary of a son of a clergyman in Gippsland in the 1850s. He recalled how an Aboriginal youth 'elected to stay with us' and how he 'took to himself the name of Billy Login, in honour of my father'.[707] The kinship association was continuously affirmed by 'Billy Login' in later years as he 'always recognized our family whenever met as "sister belonging to me," or "brother belonging to me."'[708] The Cowell family at Orbost too was identified in a kinship relationship evident from childhood memories:

> My father was foreman and had charge of the cattle section of the station [c.1880], and was Boss over the station hands who were mostly aboriginals. They were very fond of my father and called him Mungan which was their word for boss [father]. My father had great respect for the darkies...There were some who became close friends to my father and never forgot him. Years after the station was split up, they would make a pilgrimage out home to see my father. He always helped them with clothes and money and many a lovely baked dinner...They would leave boomerangs or a basket they had made for my mother, in return for the food and help.[709]

Thomas Booth could reminisce about a number of personal encounters he had had which clearly demonstrate that they lived in close quarters with each other.

> "The Aboriginals were quite numerous around Buninyong...One morning I and my sister were gathering wood in the forest when a tribe appeared. Pris my sister and I were in the midst of them and they kept pointing at her and yabbering I said to them, "Take her if you want", but Pris was also making a

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[706] Lancelott, Australia as It Is: It's Settlements, Farms and Goldfields. pp. 149-50

[707] Aboriginal peoples adoption of non-Indigenous names is an additional aspect of both acculturation and adaptation which has received very little scholarly interest but is outside the confines of this study.

[708] Leslie and Cowie, eds., The Wind Still Blows: Early Gippsland Diaries. p.28

[709] Ila brown cited in Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District. p.33

> beeline for home which she reached looking like a drowned rat after falling in a pool in her haste to escape. The blacks were greatly amused by this, more so than I was, for when I got home there was something waiting for me and I got it...The lubras like most of their sex, often quarreled amongst themselves and I once saw two fighting with hair flying like feather of two clucky hens disputing a nest...King Jerry would sit outside his mia mia and beat his tom tom"[710]

In the Orbost district the Hofen family recalled their close encounter with an unidentified Kurnai:

> Mrs. Hofen was often at home on her own when her husband was away prospecting and on other work. She got a severe fright one day with a very nasty looking aboriginal. Mr. Hofen was away camping and this fellow came along, tomahawk in hand, and demanded "plenty tucker". He appeared to be making threats about the youngest child, Pat...To her relief, the native left without further trouble.[711]

One of the more literally theatrical, yet tangible demonstrations of the close relationship that a select number of miners[712] engaged in with Aboriginal people comes from the pen of Raffaello Carboni, one of the Eureka Stockade leaders. Carboni, an Italian gold miner and the author of *The Eureka Stockade* encountered the 'Tarrang' clan [probably the Djadjawurrung clan that lived near Mt Tarrengower] in 1853 and wrote a musical play titled '*Gilburnia*'. *Gilburnia* tells how mayhem ensued when miners invaded the traditional territory of the Tarrang tribe and kidnapped Gilburnia, the daughter of the tribal elder. The extent of Carboni's contact with the Djadjawurrung would seem to have been extensive, having learnt some of their

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[710] Booth, Diary of Thomas Booth. p.2

[711] Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District. p.41

[712] Tony Pagliaro, translator of Carboni's *Gilburnia* notes that in some three hundred letters written by Italian gold seekers there are only three brief references. 'The principal information they offer is, in extremely brief comments, is that the aborigines are black, that they were naked until the Queen supplied blankets, at least to those who came to town, and that not as many are to be seen as formerly.' R Carboni, Gilburnia, trans. Tony Paglario (Melbourne: Jim Crow Press, 1993). p.ix.

vocabulary, partaken of their traditional foods, attended their corroboree and became familiar enough with their women to pass comment on their features. He wrote:

> Got among the blacks, the whole Tarrang tribe in corrobory. Lord, what a rum sight for an old European traveler. Found natives very humane, though...went to live with the blacks for a variation. Picked up, pretty soon, bits of their yabber-yabber. For a couple of years had tasted no fish; now I pounced on a couple of frogs every couple of minutes. Thought their lubras ugly enough; not so, however, the slender arms and small hands of their young girls, though their fingers be rather too long.[713]

A number of observers in the pastoral and gold period noted the name exchanging and familial kinship ritual that was being exerted by Aboriginal people upon some non-Indigenous people (usually pastoralists). Hubert de Castella's appraisal of this adaptive relationship is typical of many non-Indigenous peoples' naïve assumptions about Aboriginal culture, interpreting it as a kind of parasitism.

> Mounted on horses that belonged to our host we set off, taking with us the station overseer and as guide a black named Barney after some squatter that he had taken as godfather. Not that the blacks get baptized but they gladly choose some protector who will favour them with tobacco and the occasional glass of grog. Barney was the chief of the brabcut tribe; despite that dignity he held the horse carrying our supplies...[714]

A small number of miners had a less superior attitude towards Aboriginal people. Joseph Jenkins took an Aboriginal person he had met [circa 1870s] 'into my cottage, and invited him to share a meal with me, and I shared my blankets with him during the night'.[715] Sydney Waller [circa 1870s] actively sought the acquaintance and

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[713] Carboni, Gilburnia. pp.5-6. Further evidence that Carboni did spend considerable time with the Djadjawurrung is the small sample of their vocabulary in *Gilburnia* which he claimed was "copied from fading notes taken in pencil at Tarrengower in December-January, 1853-4".
[714] Castella, Australian Squatters. p.153
[715] Evans, ed., Diary of a Welsh Swagman, 1869-1898. p.156. This is quite an impressive instance of non-Indigenous people very willing to share his hut with an Aboriginal person. For further discussion

advice of Aboriginal company. Derramunjie, an Aboriginal stockman, had shared the campfires delights with Waller, which consisted of sharing some tea, a pipe, yarning long into the night and a song around a fire. Derramunjie also imparted his knowledge of names of creeks where gold had been found in the district to Waller. Waller noted with a sense of appreciation that he hoped the 'black man would come his way again.'[716] At times, miners' relationships with Aboriginal people were initially stalled by preconceived ideas of their 'savagery'. Miner Charles Fead related an encounter which vividly illustrates this point:

> In one of my rambles over the hills, I was startled by a loud yell and turning round, saw a grand looking savage running down towards me, brandishing a tomahawk over his head, and calling out repeatedly something that I could not understand. His appearance was, at first, somewhat disquieting but as he came nearer he pointed to a tree and then I understood that he had cornered a native bear [koala] and simply wanted to call my attention to it.[717]

Edwin Middleton's experience closely mirrored Fead's. Middleton at first considered the begging, near nakedness and eccentricity to be something to be wary of, but reconsidered his perceptions. He noted exchange of some sort whether conversation, tobacco or sharing the day appeared to be the motive, and intimated that the 'begging' and 'yabber' of the Aborigines could be construed as ritualistic exchange rather than parasitic behaviour.

> They will bother for an hour for tobacco or grog, and offer to catch anything you wish in exchange. One Blackfellow came up to me on Moonlight Flat miles from a township. I certainly felt afraid, he looked such a character, dressed in an

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on the sharing of berths see: I Clark and D Cahir, "'the Comfort of Strangers': Hospitality on the Victorian Goldfields, 1850-1860," Unpublished (2006).

[716] Dyce, Combienbar, the Valley of Contentment. James Sinclair and his mate formed favourable attitudes towards Aboriginal humour and language after having 'spent some pleasant evenings with the blacks' they met while overlanding. Over the campfire the Aboriginal men discussed their amazement at the sights in Melbourne and their dislike for Chinamen 'and both my mate and myself had a very good opinion of them.' Sinclair, Memoirs. p.28

[717] Fead, "Notes of an Unsettled Life." p.27

> old woolen shirt and cabbage tree hat, the brim broken and hung down nearly hiding his face, he cooeed several times before I stopped. When he got to me, he said, I say white boss, you give me bacca, then offering as they generally do who can speak English, to repeat the Lord's prayer. I found this man had been living at the Mt Franklin Native Home. Nearly all the blacks you meet in Victoria can speak a few words of broken English, and generally offer when they want your coloured handkerchief to Yabber, Yabber Our Father.[718]

Non-Indigenous miners, and the community in general, failed to recognize the utmost importance with which the traditional practices of reciprocity were considered by Aboriginal people, extending even into the gold mining era. A small number of people who held positions in Colonial Victoria which allowed them to witness Aboriginal society on a daily basis better understood the emphasis Aboriginal people placed on giving. William Thomas, Assistant Protector of Aborigines in Port Phillip (1839-49) noted in 1842

> They are truly generous among themselves...those who have been successful thro' the days tramp invariably distribute to those who have not been successful and what surprised me was that it was not considered as a gift but as a right and no thanks to the giver – I was I think the first white man that taught them the meaning of the word thank.[719]

In more recent times anthropologist Annette Hamilton, discussing the Indigenous people of central Australia, argued that the reciprocal relationships formed by the Indigenous people with the non-Indigenes had a value in itself:

> It is the expression of the highest moral good. The best man is he who will give everything away; the worthiest, he who will go hungry himself in order to feed someone else who has a legitimate claim on him. This claim has nothing to do with relative need; it is not charity; you do not give because someone is needy; you give because it is the right thing to do...in order for them to make claims on the whites they attempted to incorporate them into their own social system, a fact of which the whites were generally ignorant.[720]

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[718] Middleton, A Description of the Life and Times in Victoria in the 1860's by a Young Colonist. pp.53-4

[719] W Thomas, Sketch of Manners, SLV Ms, Melbourne.

[720] Hamilton, ""Blacks and Whites: The Relationships of Change"."

A story featuring traits of what both Hamilton and Thomas observed to be true of Aboriginal culture appeared in *The Argus* (6 June, 1865). It is one of the few instances I have located within newspapers which explicitly challenges stereotypical images of Aboriginal people and their associations with gold.

> Few colonists expect gratitude from the aborigines, but that they are not always unmindful of these obligations which go to make up what is called civilization has been proved of late in this district. Our readers will remember the paragraph which appeared in our last issue, notifying that a party of aborigines had found a thirty-ounce nugget at the Emu. This gold realized about 120 pounds for them and shortly after they had patronized the draper's shop, and provided themselves with good winter clothing, they determined to pay a visit to Clunes, where some months since a resident had been very kind to them. According to their version of the affair, he gave them money to purchase extra blankets when the weather was very cold, and they could not forget his kindness. Accordingly, the party, to the number of nine, hired for three pounds two vehicles, on Wednesday, and proceeded in them to Clunes, for the purpose of returning to their benefactor the sum he had placed at their disposal on that occasion. Some amusement was occasioned by the sight of the party when they drove out of Talbot, the women being decked in crinolines, good warm dresses, and bonnets, and the men clothed in wearing apparel of the latest fashions; but when the motive of their errand was known, they certainly rose considerably in the estimation of the bystanders.[721]

A majority of miners however were 'new chums' to the bush, who focused solely on economic imperatives and had not experienced the Aboriginal peoples' expertise nor enjoyed their company in the solitudes of a foreign land. Richard Pope's sole entry in his lengthy and detailed diaries spanning over thirty years, briefly recorded, under the heading 'Journey to Pleasant Creek' in 1870, that upon alighting at the Buangor Cobb and Co station he 'saw several Australian natives [Djabwurrung] one of whom had a brassplate suspended to his neck on which his name was engraved Thomas Jerusalem

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[721] *Talbot Leader.*

Chief of the Buangor Tribe.'[722] Pope and many of his non-Indigenous contemporaries in the gold period were acknowledged sojourners, drifting from one field to another as news of new and more fabulous claims was reported. Pope himself worked on mines in four continents, numerous goldfields across Victoria and eventually died at the Broken Hill mines in New South Wales. It is hardly surprising that travelers of his ilk rarely sought in their diaries and letters to provide any commentary that was not of a fleeting nature with regard to Aboriginal people and chose not to 'welcome even the converse of the savage.'[723] The opinions of some non-Indigenous compatriots towards Aboriginal people shocked Welsh agricultural worker, Joseph Jenkins, who, whilst recuperating at Maryborough Hospital, relayed how 'One time the Australian natives (the blacks) were discussed. The majority of the patients held it was even a Christian obligation to be rid of them all. In the name of God, whence came such authority?!!!'[724]

Other miners, out of feelings of modesty and timidity mixed with unfamiliarity and racism avoided the Aboriginal people they encountered on the goldfields. The nudity and / or bizarre appearance of Aboriginal people, as interpreted by non-Indigenous people of the nineteenth century, feature prominently in miners' records.[725] Robert Thomas' autobiographical account of his time on the Campbells Creek / Malmsbury diggings (1853-64) provides us with a graphic example:

> I could see some creatures coming towards me which I could not at first make out what they were, but upon a nearer approach I found them to be natives (blacks) this was the first time I had ever seen any of this species of the human family and at first doubted whether they were human beings or not, their low

[722] R Pope, Diaries, Diary, SLV, Melbourne.
[723] Hughes in: Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. p.221
[724] Evans, ed., Diary of a Welsh Swagman, 1869-1898. p.46.
[725] K Wilmer, Adventures at the Goldfields (London: Dean and Son, 1859). p.227.; Whittle, Reminiscences. p.78

> foreheads, black hair and piercing savage looking eyes did not prepossess me in their favor and for covering they had nothing but a dirty old blanket which had been white sometime, and which did not more than half cover them; these were all lubras (women) and carried their picanninies (children) on their backs in a kind of a bag formed by the blanket they were talking together in their own tongue [Djadjawurrung] of which I of course couldn't understand a word, as passing one asked me You got em bacco? To which enquiry I shook my head and answering no, so they passed on. [726]

A significant number of miners expressed their loathing of Aboriginal peoples' 'depraved' customs and spoke at length of their physiological features. Thomas Pierson, a miner at Ballarat and McIvor in central Victoria (1852-64), underpinned his fear and loathing of Aboriginal people with notions of race and ethnocentrism.

> While at the diggings we saw many of the aborigineese or natives of this country, they are very Black, tall and straight – have straight hair, they are very Lazy can't be hired to work, they used to come to our and others tents everyday begging, many of them can talk English, they are very degraded, the women Lewd, and almost entirely naked – have only a scarf around their loins – some have robes made of opossum skins – they don't even make a hut to live in but bend a small tree throw some branches over it when it rains or is frost, and lay down on the ground – they are given to theft – otherwise inoffensive if not put up to be otherwise by whites, the bushrangers get them for guides and then they will murder.[727]

Edwin Price, also a miner at Ballarat, mirrored Pierson's observation of both their prominent appearance at the fields and his derision of Aboriginal people. His character and physical descriptions of them are festooned with racist and ethnocentric epithets, typical of many writers in the nineteenth century.

> They are the Laziest, Ugliest, Dirtiest and most wretched of any race I ever saw, in height they seldom exceed five feet, wear no boots or hats and seldom anything save a blanket on them. There complexion are as dark as the blackest Africans and ten times as revolting the only redeeming quality in them is the hair, which is very black, curly and glossy, when oiled with wild cat fat…I

[726] Thomas, Autobiography.
[727] Pierson, Diaries.

> came across an encampment of them...each man had his Lubra (or Wife) with him to carry all his weapons and game and every pair had their separate fire, the Earth was their bed, and nothing save an old torn blanket to cover them...one old heathen was the cook...In the interior they are wild and pugnacious and cannibals.[728]

The prim and proper sensibilities of Edward Tame were affronted by the nudity, body adornments and ritualized scarring 'on various parts of the body so as to leave ugly cicatrices, their patterns varying in different tribes.'[729] Tame was fascinated, providing quite a deal of ethnographic and anthropological data about the Aboriginal people he encountered in central Victoria from his observations and second-hand information, but was also appalled when confronted at close quarters.

> In the morning following this noisy corroboree, after breakfast we were startled to see these dark skinned uncouth brethren come pouring over the hill top, down its slopes and over the creek to us. Pretty sights they were indeed, nothing on their heads and scarcely anything on their bodies, save a plentiful supply of grease and ochre of colours I cannot describe.[730]

Robert Whittle, a storeowner on the Daisy Hill and Talbot fields in central Victoria was equally enamored with Aboriginal ceremonies and weapons, and revolted by the nudity; alcohol abuse and customs displayed towards their women folk.[731]

Those who came to the goldfields of Victoria after the official discovery of gold in 1851 were predominately new comers to Australia, whereas those who came in the pastoralism period were judging the Aboriginal people they encountered against a wider perspective (the Aboriginal people of various regions across Tasmania and New South Wales). Therefore they were more prone to be adept at brokering relationships

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[728] Emphasis appears in original source. Price, Letters.
[729] Tame, Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings.
[730] Tame, Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings.
[731] Whittle, Reminiscences. p.77

with individual Aboriginal people at the very least. Those who came from the European world made innumerable references to physiological details of Victorian Aboriginal people (in particular on the darkness of their complexion), and noted their apparent barbarity in light of housing and treatment of women. These comments are understandable given their ethnocentric and xenophobic un-familiarity.

There were many official visitors to the goldfields like Celeste de Chabrillan (wife of the French Consul) who were less than admiring of Aboriginal peoples' otherness, and saw nothing admirable in their culture or countenance:

> The country's black natives are the worst built and the most frightful beings I have seen in my life...their only covering is a wretched, earth coloured animal skin...They are so lazy of body and mind that no one has ever been able to teach a single one of them how to do anything. Their intelligence consists of catching opossums in trees at night, and in searching in tree bark for fat white worms which they swallow whole. It turns your stomach when, by chance, you are forced to witness one of these meals.[732]

Charles Doudiet, a French artist on the goldfields of Ballarat, concurred with Celeste de Chabrillan, opining that the 'Australian blacks are justly reckoned the lowest in the grade of humanity.'[733] Swedish miner, Carl Lagergren, provided a typical 'new chum' description of Aboriginal people (presumably Djadjawurrung) who camped beside him for a winter at Caledonian Reef in 1851:

> They look similar to some indigenous people of Papa New Guinea and many other tribes that inhabit other parts all over the Australian continent. Their color is black/brown perhaps more chocolate coloured with an oily shiny skin, sturdy bodies and black hair, if annoyed shows their terror.[734]

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[732] Cd Chabrillan, The French Consul's Wife: Memoirs of Celeste De Chabrillan in Goldrush Australia, trans. P Clancy and J Allen (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 1998).pp.121-2. Chabrillan penned a number of novels relating to goldfields exploits which exhibited a large degree of scorn for Aboriginal people.

[733] C Doudiet, Australian Sketches 1852-1855 (Ballarat: Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, 1997). Plate 28.

[734] Lagergren, Journal and Letters.

Plainly, biological and cultural assumptions of superiority were very prevalent but it is possible also that some of the vitriolic descriptions of Aboriginal people afforded by new immigrants to Australia, such as Emma White, who thought them 'ugly black devils',[735] can perhaps also be attributed to scarcely ever feeling so 'dull, gloomy, pained, weak and generally wretched'[736] in a strange and bewildering land. Expressions of racial hatred and severe discomfort with Aboriginal people were certainly not only the province of new immigrants suffering the severe pangs of homesickness, missing the familiar and feeling inadequate. There does appear to be a greater propensity evident in the archival materials for ethnocentrism and racism where people were feeling despair - 'the thought comes to me like a death chill that I shall never see England again.'[737] Forays into more meaningful conversation with and about Aboriginal people other than poor comparisons to Maoris or Papuans, are relatively rare in the historical accounts of those people who, like Lagergren, came, saw, mined and left.

Sightings of 'regular aborigines', especially women who were not dressed, from a nineteenth century western conventional point of view, were something to write home about.[738] William Tomlinson 'fell in with' his first 'regular aborigines' in the bush, somewhere between Geelong and Ballarat in September 1853. It is interesting that he distinguishes between 'town natives' (Geelong, presumably Wathawurrung) - he had noted previously in his correspondence who wore 'blankets over them like shawls' or were 'sometimes entirely without clothing of any kind, except an opossum rug or

[735] White, Letters. 10 November, 1853.
[736] White, Letters.
[737] White, Letters.
[738] George Wathen was appalled that the women were naked and 'quite indifferent to it'. See Wathen, The Golden Colony, or Victoria in 1854: With Remarks on the Geology of the Australian Gold Fields. p.123

blanket' - and the 'regular aborigines' (Wathawurrung) he had seen in the bush. He observed: 'There were four of these huts ['mia mias] occupied by about 20 to 25 men and women, most of them lubras or women especially "a la Adam and Eve" or in as complete a state of nudity as when they first came into the world.'[739]

For John Chandler it was the nudity especially which elicited an added sense of fear for his personal well being and prompted him to avoid associations with them. On a journey through the bush he encountered: 'a little crowd of them, and they were all naked. I felt afraid, being alone, that they would molest me, and feeling a little modest, left the track and kept round them, making back for the track when well beyond them.'[740] Like Robert Thomas, and many of his contemporaries, the absence of Western styled clothing was an anathema, made even more profound by the fact that 'The women smoke as well as the men and are all remarkably fond of rum.'[741] This perspective should be tempered however by the mores that existed amongst many of the immigrant people arriving in Victoria who held particularly strong views about race, class and gender. As an example, Thomas Woolner's scathing appraisal of the class of miners he saw at the Reid Creek Diggings demonstrates that Aboriginal people were not the only recipients of contempt: 'People are swarming to the diggings like folks go to a fair: I notice some women among them, hideous looking creatures, more frightful to my eyes than the black gins.'[742] Woolner further derided the miners' assemblage of tents as being like 'the meeting place of all the gypsies on the earth, all the men look like gypsies.'[743] Of the mining fraternity at Kilmore he heaped the most scorn, describing his countrymen and women as being like 'maggots wriggling over

[739] Tomlinson, Diary. 15 September, 1853.
[740] Cannon, ed., Forty Years in the Wilderness. p.154
[741] Tomlinson, Diary.
[742] Woolner, Diary.
[743] Woolner, Diary.

corruption.'[744] One unidentified writer camped at Pentland Hills, near Bacchus Marsh, in central Victoria - described an equally scathing attack on the ignoble nation of miners by his host who was 'in an ecstasy of indignation at the sordidness of the goldseekers, and sustained without intermission, a tirade of invectiveness against them. "Well positively, I begin to respect the Blacks", he exclaimed "they appear noble in comparison to the race that has come to occupy their land."[745] At times, attitudes towards working class Irish translated into comparisons with Aboriginal people. Samuel Mossman compared the mixture of traditional and non-Indigenous clothing worn by Aboriginal people in South Melbourne in 1852 with the 'ludicrous appearance of the ragged Irishman'[746], and JD Mereweather's description in Kyneton in October 1852 of a 'maid-servant, an Irish girl, as savage as the surrounding aborigines'[747] whilst Alfred Darvall, a miner at Beechworth and the Ovens valley in 1857, pessimistically compared Aboriginal people with Germans.[748]

Like most new arrivals from Europe or the Americas who brought with them the prejudices of their background in regards to Aboriginal people and the Chinese, many, such as the Frenchwoman Celeste de Chabrillan, also had a particularly hostile attitude towards the British. Chabrillan wrote scathingly of the British people, making numerous derogatory remarks about them throughout her journal such as 'Englishwomen accept drunkenness as an entirely natural habit in men'.[749] Similarly, her countrymen, Antoine Fauchery and Charles Eberlie, did not hold back on their scorn of squatters and miners, Fauchery exclaiming that 'The squatters are Australia's

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[744] Woolner, Diary.
[745] Anonymous, Pentland Hills, Illustrated Australian Magazine, vol. 3-4 (Melbourne: Ham Brothers, 1852). p.254
[746] S Mossman, The Gold Regions of Australia (London: William Orr and Co., 1852). p.73
[747] Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. p.152
[748] A Darval, Papers, SLV MS, Melbourne.
[749] Chabrillan, The French Consul's Wife: Memoirs of Celeste De Chabrillan in Goldrush Australia. p.13

real savages; white savages who even if they don't offer sacrifices to cannibalism and don't eat blackfellows, have at least killed a good number of them in bygone days...they live like bears amid their sheep and cattle',[750] whilst Eberlie considered that the 'natives were more civilized than many miners'.[751]

APPRAISAL CHANGES

It will be demonstrated that for a minority of gold miners, close association with Aboriginal people provided the opportunity to learn elements of Aboriginal philosophy and culture and from this schooling grew an appreciation and respect that were unusual at the time. A number of writers in the mining period as had occurred in the pastoralism period, found on investigation that Aboriginal people were not as 'degraded' nor 'disgusting' as they had been promulgated to be.[752] Elizabeth Ramsay Laye, as a representative example, considered that 'The natives are not as disgusting as they are generally represented.'[753] Moreover, Hubert De Castella, a visitor to the goldfields of Victoria, 'had heard so much about their ugliness that I was amazed to find them much better than I had expected' and added with equal amazement that 'their slow, relaxed gait is not without nobility, and they put their feet down with a solemnity which reminded me of the walk of actors on stage.'[754] Robert Gow conceded in his 1861 journal (after droving with a number of them for a time and forging a bush mate-ship relationship) that 'There are some fine traits in the characters of the blacks – they are not the wild tiger-like bloodthirsty savage generally

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[750] Fauchery, Letters from a Miner in Australia. p.98
[751] Eberlie, Diary.
[752] Charles Fead, a miner in the Gippsland goldfields came across an Aboriginal camp and provided us with his impressions: 'All seemed asleep, but one young girl who, throwing aside her rug, stood erect and gracefully stretching her limbs, looking a perfect model of female symmetry. Indeed the walk and natural bearing of these people was admirable.' See: Fead, "Notes of an Unsettled Life." p.27
[753] Ramsay-Laye, Social Life and Manners in Australia. p.59
[754] Castella, Australian Squatters. p.72

supposed.'[755] Visitors to the goldfields such as Oscar Comettant wrote of his surprise when he met with Aboriginal people who were 'endowed with qualities that could serve as the basic elements of a moral character of the highest order' and physically were 'more or less perfect specimens'.[756] It is little surprise that Comettant was amazed as he had been informed prior to arriving in Australia that they were 'degenerate and bestial...more horrible than all the monkeys in the world.'[757] Joshua Gray, a miner on the Wedderburn goldfields echoed Comettant's appraisal of Aboriginal people:

> Very many people have formed a very unfavorable opinion of the Australian blackfellow, as he is called, but I can safely affirm that they were the most inoffensive savages I have ever met...Among the whole number visiting Korong I never heard of but one who was ever accused of stealing, and that one was fully civilized, having been in the Police Force for five years...The 'natives' are equally quick to learn any useful occupation as the average European, if they have the chance and sufficient inducement.[758]

Miners such as JM Smith upon reflection deemed Aboriginal peoples' traditional way of life wiser than what he had at first considered:

> They are a curious race, and are said to be very low in the scale of humanity because they live without working and with very little fighting – which in my humble opinion shows their wisdom rather than their stupidity. The European makes a slave of himself for gold – and calls it industry – and then hops off the twig before he is able to enjoy it; he fights and murders his brethren, robs them of his wealth and devastates their country – and calls it honour and glory. The aborigines wander about a fine country, view the beauties of nature as they come fresh from the hand of their Maker and in their hearts they rejoice and glorify Him...They resist all his [non-Indigenous people's] attempts to make them abandon their habitual ease and independence except when tempted by rum and tobacco, for which they will readily work. It is vain to try to fetter them to houses or towns. They have tasted freedom and prefer God's canopy to man's. And for this they are called barbarians; and for this they are despised.

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[755] Gow, Journal.
[756] O Comettant, In the Land of Kangaroos and Gold Mines, trans. Judith Armstrong (Melbourne: Rigby, 1980). p.91
[757] Comettant, In the Land of Kangaroos and Gold Mines. pp.90-1
[758] Cusack, ed., The History of the Wedderburn Goldfields. pp.18-19

> Pshaw! The European has much to learn, although he thinks himself so very wise.[759]

WE Stanbridge, a visitor to the central parts of Victoria, was impressed by the repertoire of information on astronomy he was provided with by his Djadjawurrung and Djabwurrung informants, and was keen to 'produce in others the astonishment that I felt, as I sat by a little camp fire, with a few boughs for shelter, on a large plain, listening for the first time to two aboriginals, speaking of Yurree, wanjel, Larnan-kurrk, Kulkun-bulla, as they pointed to those beautiful stars.'[760] Some miners such as JF Hughes had lived through both the bush frontier conflict times and the relatively quiet times of gold, and considered 'it fell to the lot of not a few who led a contemplative life and strove, Orpheus-like, to charm the wild denizens of the forest'[761]. He had interacted with Aboriginal people in both periods and considered it a positive experience.

> At that time scattered tribes of aborigines still roamed about the bush, and overlanders in search of country often told of thrilling adventures among the blacks. But when the goldseekers arrived those "troublous" times were succeeded by a period of comparative security, and though the latter could not speak of hair-breadth escapes from the spears of the blacks they could relate interesting narratives of their contact with the aborigines in their native wilds.[762]

Hughes deemed that his intercourse with the Djadjawurrung had afforded him both 'amusement and instruction'. He admired and found great interest in many aspects of Djadjawurrung culture, and was keen to record for posterity some detail of place

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[759] Cuffley, ed., Send the Boy to Sea: The Memoirs of a Sailor on the Goldfields by James Montagu Smith. pp.72-3

[760] WE Stanbridge, "Some Particulars of the General Charateristics of the Astronomy and Mythology of the Tribes in the Central Parts of Victoria," Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London 1 (1861). p.304

[761] JF Hughes in Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. p.222

[762] JF Hughes in Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. p.220

names, corroboree proceedings and chants, vocabulary (both pidgin English and Djadjawurrung), shelter constructions, cooking techniques, bush foods, hunting techniques, weapons and bush lore. Hughes, like many who interacted with Aboriginal people for lengthy periods in the bush, particularly enjoyed their narrating skills, sharp wit and *joie de vivre:*

> They had a keen sense of humor, and it afforded them great merriment to get me to shout aloud at night some message in their own language to their comrades across the creek, the reply which reverberated through the woods causing them intense amusement. They were also excellent mimics. One of the tribe, more adventurous than his fellows, had visited the capital of the colony, and though he ordinarily spoke in broken English he could excellently imitate the language and gesture of a new chum swell he had met at an hotel, pronouncing distinctly, with an affected air, "Waiter, bring me a glass of brandy."[763]

Most goldfields documents such as diaries and letters are bereft of information on Aboriginal people, or at least contain only sketchy fragments. The majority of miners did not see their association with Aboriginal people as an opportunity for cultural exploration and enrichment, seeing the odd practical lesson in bushcraft or an exhibition of their corroborees[764] as worthwhile but on the main they were here for the sole purpose of extracting gold and exiting. Miner CR Read, at the Turon fields in NSW, put it bluntly: 'My occupation, whilst in Australia, engrossed my whole time, and I never came much in contact with the natives, or even heard them much spoken about.'[765]

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[763] JF Hughes in Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. p.225

[764] Miners such as Lawrence Struilby showed great eagerness to watch corroborees, often describing them in some detail. See: Graham, ed., Observations and Experiences During 25 Years of Bush Life in Australia. pp.120-3

[765] It is ironic and contradictory that Read expressed this opinion as in the previous four pages of his book he revealed two separate accounts of Aboriginal people mining for gold. See:Read, What I Heard, Saw and Did at the Australian Goldfields. Pp 252-6

Conversely, however, some miners and visitors to the goldfields of Victoria recalled having Aboriginal people as neighbors in a sense that the pastoralists had rarely accepted. Horatio Wheelwright, a lawyer cum naturalist, explained that when he camped at Mordialloc, 'he lived on very neighbourly terms' with the Boonwurrung people, who 'generally had their miamies close to my hut; and as I never made too free with them, or gave them a promise I did not intend to keep, I was a bit of a favourite with them'.[766] Like all neighbors everywhere, sometimes the noise of their 'goings on' got irritating. Miners such as Oliver Ragless offered that the nocturnal 'waddie-beating' of Aborigines camped across the creek 'are making some of us cross', but otherwise opined them good neighbors.[767] Others such as Henry Burchett and his friend Morgan at the Bendigo diggings 'curious to witness the ceremony of interment' asked permission from Benjamin, a Djadjawurrung clan head to attend. An obvious degree of familiarity had been established between them as Burchett offered both practical advice and solace to the grieving party whilst in return he was admitted into the sanctity of 'native funerals' and became privy to aspects of Aboriginal lore and law 'to which few white men are admitted'.[768] Other relationships were far more utilitarian such as the experiences of Charles Eberlie, a miner on his way to the Ballarat diggings, who was humbugged by 'King Jimmy of the tribe of Emu Creek' at Skipton in 1855 for some tobacco, and so in 'order to remain on good terms with the natives we gave him all the tobacco we had.' The French miner also confessed to being too tired after a long day's travel to wait for the end of a corroboree staged for their benefit and added that he and his party had followed the conventions of other miners by 'camping at a gunshot's distance from the natives [Wathawurrung], in that way imitating the English and the Americans who did not like to feel themselves too

[766] Wheelwright, Bush Wanderings of a Naturalist. p.260
[767] Annear, Nothing but Gold: The Diggers of 1852. p.120
[768] Burchett, Letters. pp.91-94

close to the coloured people, however inoffensive they were.'[769] A few changed their attitudes with time, such as Phillip Johnson, a miner on the Ovens Valley, who at first contended that he 'had no high opinion of them', probably because of begging, but as he slowly got to know them he began to 'distinguish their features behind the black mask that had before enveloped them'.[770] In his correspondence there are constant references to feeding them tea, sugar, etc, to having learnt some of the languages where he was prospecting, and what he knew of their kinship networks and also to an Aboriginal group having free egress to his tent. As an example of the intimacy which he enjoyed with a local group he wrote in April 1854 of how he had 'cooked opossum for blacks, some of whom slept in my tent'.[771]

There are a few examples where the cooperativeness and close collaborating between Victorian Aboriginal groups and non-Indigenous people were sorely tested by misunderstandings and contempt from others not privy to such a union. A historical example which illustrates this scenario vividly is to be found in the story of 'Burnt Bridge', a locality near present day Ringwood (a suburb of Melbourne):.

> The [bullock] train team, with the help of local aborigines, layed a corduroy bridge over the swamp and on the return trips, always gave a hand to the aborigines for they did not steal and would help if needed, but in 1873 another wagon in opposition started from Melbourne and they frightened the Aborigines away by firing their guns, so the aborigines burnt the bridge. The original team spoke to the tribe who helped relay the corduroy. The new team after being spoken to, fell into line and from then on the land mark was 'The Burnt Bridge Swamp'.[772]

On mining fields and towns, mishaps or accidents had fatal consequences for miners or bush dwellers because medical attention was unavailable or difficult to obtain.

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[769] Eberlie, Diary.
[770] Johnson, Papers.
[771] Johnson, Papers.
[772] J Rodaughan, Brief History of Ringwood East and Burnt Bridge, SLV MS, Melbourne. pp.2-3

Subsequently Aboriginal advice about the healing properties of herbs and plants and some of their methods were adopted. In the Dimboola district when Horatio Ellerman accidentally wounded his companion, the Wergaia stemmed the flow of blood by packing the wound with a poultice composed of the fresh contents of a sheep's stomach, probably an adaptation of traditional medical procedure. Ellerman rode 150 miles to fetch the nearest doctor at Carngham near Ballarat, returning within three days to find the victim still alive.[773] It is likely that non-indigenous people who were the recipients of Aboriginal medical tutelage which saved their lives might have also 'distinguished their features behind the black mask.'

In the oral family histories passed down by descendants of miners who had stayed in the goldfields' region, such as the Marsden family in the Cardigan-Haddon area west of Ballarat, there are vestiges of accounts of relationships, though often very paternalistic and condescending, which speak of Aboriginal individuals as community identities in small goldfield towns. Small gold-towns folk watched their corroborees, knew about their springs, mortuary sites, invested time in relationships with key individuals, were at times showered with gifts but were more often 'humbugged' for money and utilitarian items such as axes, clothes and pans:[774]

> My grandfather told of aborigines in the bush on the Ridge. He told of corroborees and ...aboriginal shelters and of an area where, as a child, aboriginal bones could be found. My grandfather talked often of King Billy and of his wives. He had a spear, woomera and a shield that he said were given to his father by King Billy. I have memories of him saying that King Billy could be a nuisance because he wanted money, not just food and clothes. I remember two stories he told. The first was that King Billy had a liking for beer and that he was banned from the local pubs/shanties. He tells that when a boy his father, elder brothers and himself would often cart hay between the family farm at

[773] Longmire, Nine Creeks to Albacutya - a History of the Shire of Dimboola. pp.28-9

[774] Thomas Wilkinson witnessed corroborees at Yallowin where people from Yass, Wellaregang, Omeo and Mitta Mitta would congregate. He also knew intimately key headmen and maintained a close working relationship with others. See; T Wilkinson, "A Record of Olden Days," Journal of Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society 3 (1970). p.7

> Cardigan and one in the Smythesdale area. King Billy would wait for them near the pub at Kopke's. He would ask money for beer, which was given to him on the condition that he bought his beer at the above pub. Apparently the lady who ran the pub had banned him but would serve him if he could get to the bar and the land lady's attempts to prevent him doing so provided amusement for the patrons...My grandfather also told of King Billy often being found asleep under bushes on and around the farm.[775]

On the Mt Elliot goldfields in the Upper Murray region, Alfred Jarvis and his family's hard times were softened considerably by the help and generosity of 'Black Mag', an Aboriginal woman who 'brought them fresh meat – kangaroo, possum and wallaby – or showed Alfred where he could shoot more for himself.'[776]

ABORIGINAL VOICES

When Aboriginal voices are articulated in goldfields historical documents through the filter of non-indigenous writings they are seldom ones of diffidence, especially in relation to their individual and collective rights. In both the pictorial and written records there are exemplars of Indigenous resistance to unfair governmental controls on the goldfields. William Howitt, a goldfields commentator, suggested that the would-be reformists 'design for a digger's flag should also represent the native black's flag as there were several'.[777] Moreover, Thomas Ham's illustration of the 'Great Meeting of the miners' at Forest Creek, considered the harbinger of the Eureka Rebellion, depicts an Aboriginal man and possibly his son in the midst of what came to be known as the 'Red Ribbon Rebellion'.[778]

The written records reveal more conclusive pieces of evidence linking Indigenous people with the wider demand for civil rights:

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[775] S Marsden and S White, "Aboriginal Heritage," ed. Fred Cahir (Ballarat: pers.comm, 2003).
[776] Carmody, Early Days of the Upper Murray. p.32
[777] Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold.
[778] T Ham, Great Meeting of Diggers, December 15th 1851, SLV, Melbourne.

> A group of Aboriginal diggers at Forest creek in 1852 when asked to show their licenses replied to the mounted police that "the gold and land were theirs by right so why should they pay money to the Queen?"[779]

On New South Wales goldfields too, similar retorts were heard from Aboriginal miners:

> I heard a native in the town of Sofala...chaffing a sergeant of the mounted police (whom he apparently knew well) asking him what business had he or any other white fellow to come and take *his* land, and rob him of *his* gold? what would he (the sergeant) say, if black fellow went to England and "turn em Queen out?"[780]

Indigenous people also attempted to invoke their democratic traditions of fulfilling traditional responsibilities, sharing their country and resources with visitors. Joe Banks, a Kurnai man from the Brodribb district, expressed his indignation to Constable Hall, a non-Indigenous Police Officer after the Constable had failed to come to the aid of Banks:

> At one time Joe and his gin were camped out at Bete Bolong. A big flood came down. The old gin died. Joe sent word in to Orbost by John Johnston to tell Const. Hall to come out. Because of the flood, he did not come out for three days. Joe was very angry. "I will report you Mr. Hall, you should have been here three days ago." Mr. Hall said the flood had held him up and he would not be able to take the body to Orbost. The policeman suggested that she should be buried there. Joe agreed after a lot of protesting but he made Const. Hall dig the grave. "No that's your job."[781]

It is almost certain that many gold miners' accounts, such as Walter Bridges at Buninyong, of Wathawurrung peoples' insistent *begging* were not desperate ploys to extract food and goods from white colonizers. There was clearly an expectation of being recompensed for use of land – in a relationship of exchange. Other miners such as James Madden and his wife also remarked on the ire of Aboriginal people, presumably enraged by the invasion of their homelands by hordes of immigrant

[779] Annear, Nothing but Gold: The Diggers of 1852. p.289
[780] Read, What I. Heard, Saw and Did at the Australian Goldfields. p.252
[781] Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District. p.8

miners in 1852. Enroute to the goldfields of Ballarat they met up with what Mrs. James Madden termed the remnants of the blacks and 'a big fellow who proudly assumed his kingship by stepping out to threaten us if we did not leave his terrain.'[782] There was a palpable discontent by some Aboriginal people with their non-Indigenous kin over a wide range of matters. A miner and his companions, as noted previously, who had camped near a newly made Djadjawurrung grave at the Bendigo diggings in 1854, were curtly told to make other arrangements as they had impinged on sensitive mortuary arrangements.[783] At times Aboriginal people tried to educate their non-Indigenous neighbors of their obligations and responsibilities. A Welsh miner noted in his diary that he had been given a scathing lecture by a Djadjawurrung man about the sub-standard etiquette and morals of white people:

> A dark native, that is an Aborigine, paid me a visit. He was looking for bees. He mentioned that when a native discovers a hive, he invites the neighbours to partake of the honey, but when a white Christian discovers it, he keeps the produce for himself.[784]

Aboriginal people across Australian goldfields continued to declare their title and on many occasions insisted upon formal acknowledgement of what was theirs by right. Local historian, Lorna Banfield, related a story of a Djabwurrung man, dubbed 'King Peter', who in the early days of the Moyston (central Victoria) gold rush was the terror of the township: 'It was his custom to take exercise up and down the main street with a bar of iron in his hand, and when so employed he was left in solitary occupation of the highway.'[785] Charles Fead, a miner in the Buchan area remembered a 'brawny aboriginal walking into the hut and helping himself to a drink of water.'[786] Newspaper reports noted the public grievances of Aboriginal people who sought

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[782] Anderson, The Flowers of the Field - a History of Ripon Shire. p.88
[783] Hamilton, Pioneering Days in Western Victoria.
[784] Evans, ed., Diary of a Welsh Swagman, 1869-1898. p.38
[785] Banfield, Like the Ark: The Story of Ararat. p.22
[786] Fead, "Notes of an Unsettled Life." p.26

acknowledgement of prior attachment to the land and at times recompense, such as 'Dicky', a Wathawurrung elder at Lal Lal, near Ballarat who complained to some miners that they had 'robbed him of Lal Lal which was his inheritance and collected several shillings compensation'.[787] Equally, the *Geelong Advertiser* reported that the Wathawurrung elder: 'King Jerry proclaiming his intention of demanding restitution [from Geelong City Councillors] of all provinces of which he has been illegally deprived, after having held them by indefeasible title from time immemorial, together with all improvements thereon, and revenues accruing from all sources'.[788] Some Aboriginal people, such as Equinehup, a Djadjawurrung man, formally petitioned colonial authorities (Railway Commissioners) expressing his claim to original land title:

> Gentlemen and brothers too, I am the last of the Aborigine tribe in these parts. I do Humbly wish you to compare two lots of title deeds. I received mine from the author of nature While the land occupied by all the railways Is titled by the white mans lawyers.[789]

The same theme was reported in 1857 at Lake Wendouree, Ballarat, by Wathawurrung people lamenting, not just the loss of their land, but the lack of acknowledgement:

> In leaving the place we stumbled on the mia-mia of King Billy...The old man seemed grieved at the revelry and debauch which on all hands surrounded him, and was evidently taking no part in the noisy performance. The princess did not imitate her father's taciturnity, but at once with all the volubility of a female tongue proclaimed that the whole district of Ballaarat was at one period the patrimony of her sire.[790]

Very occasionally it is possible to hear some semblance of Aboriginal voices expressing their disdain for the new influx of outsiders *Ngammadjidj* miner travelers

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[787] Unknown, "Lal Lal."
[788] *Geelong Advertiser*, *Argus* 2 November 1866.
[789] Evans, ed., Diary of a Welsh Swagman, 1869-1898. p.156
[790] Ballaarat Times, "A Corroboree."

on their land. John Moore, a miner at Bendigo, relayed how Djadjawurrung people expressed their distaste, not necessarily at the practice of mining itself as they were familiar with resource extraction, but at the fevered frenzy and psychologically disturbed character of the "whitefellow all gone mad digging holes and washing stones". A Djadjawurrung farmer at Franklinford in central Victoria frankly confessed in 1856 that 'for a time, at first, he did not like either Europeans or European customs.'[791] Unfortunately, he did not divulge details of why he disliked Europeans, but it would not be difficult to hazard a guess considering what devastations had been visited upon the Djadjawurrung and their country.

There were grave concerns expressed by the squattocracy and the middle classes in colonial Victoria about the 'common class' miners whose 'very language is perfectly measled with obscenity and the vilest oaths and the basest phraseology, and they drink all they can get.'[792] The disdain which Aboriginal people held for certain non-Indigenous classes of people was also occasionally aired, as recorded by Anne Meredith at Mt Elephant in the Western district of Victoria (circa 1850s) where she made mention of how 'an aboriginal native who had for some time installed himself among the hangers on at our station, looking with an air of lofty contempt upon some of the new-comers, inquired of their master what he would possibly want with those "wildfellows".'[793] Being spoken down to was particularly resented as JC Hamilton recalled.

> I remember meeting a young black woman in the early fifties, who was with the tribe in our district, but who had been for a short time at a mission station in South Australia. I spoke to her in pidgin English, and her answer was, "You need not speak to me like that; I understand English as well as you." In this she

[791] Westgarth, Victoria and the Australian Gold Mines in 1857. p.224
[792] Mossman, Letters. p.89
[793] L Meredith, Over the Straits: A Visit to Victoria (London: Chapman and Hall, 1861). p.262

was far ahead of the Highland lady, whose reply to the correction of a friend was, "I can speak ta English as well as you, Tonal, and twice as more."[794]

Other Aboriginal voices articulated their dejection about being dispossessed in a most succinct way, almost certainly articulating the despondency of others. In answer to questions posed by the Victorian Government's 1858 Select Committee into the Present Condition of the Aborigines, Mr. Hull, a District Magistrate, related a conversation he had had with Derrimut, a Boonwurrung elder, in present day Melbourne:

> The last time I saw him was nearly opposite the Bank of Victoria, he stopped me and said "You give me shilling, Mr. Hull". "No", I said, "I will not give you shilling. I will go and give you some bread", and he held his hand out to me and he said "Me plenty sulky with you long time ago, you plenty sulky me; no sulky now, Derrimut soon die", and then he pointed with a plaintive manner, which they can affect, to the Bank of Victoria, all this mine, all along here Derrimut's once; no matter now, me soon tumble down". I said, "Have you no children?" and he flew into a passion immediately. "Why me have lubra? Why me have piccaniny? You have all this place, no good have children, no good have lubra, me tumble down and die very soon now".[795]

A recognition of changed times on the subject of foods was voiced to Thomas Woolner by an unidentified Aboriginal man near Kyneton in 1852. In response to being asked 'which he preferred, mutton or kangaroo flesh' the reply heralded a much wider sense of change that had befell Aboriginal people, opining that 'This one [mutton] kangaroo now for the black man'.[796] Aboriginal voices too are to be gleaned from the gold mining period that demonstrates their incredulousness and poor opinion

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[794] Hamilton, Pioneering Days in Western Victoria.
[795] W Hull in: Victorian Government, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines,; Together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices.
[796] Woolner, Diary.

of non-Indigenous people's bush skills.[797] Seweryn Korzelinski, a Polish miner at Bendigo, related how one of the Djadjawurrung women who often visited that neighborhood 'suddenly turned her head to one side and seemed to be listening to something. After a while she jumped to a solid tree nearby and with a tomahawk split the bark and pulled out a white grub about four inches long which she ate on the spot. Asked how she knew the worm was there, she answered surprised: "But I heard it. It was only a few steps away."[798] During the exploratory and pastoral period in Victoria there had been an enormous reliance on Aboriginal guides and trackers which was perpetuated to some extent during the gold mining period. The disdain with which some Aboriginal people felt about non-Indigenous people's sense of place is encapsulated in this conversation:

> This colour of our skins will disappear through intermarriage because, unlike other dark races, there are no 'throwbacks' with the Aboriginal. It'll just disappear eventually. I told an old full-blood tracker this once. He thought for a while, then looked at me and said, "How will the white man find his way then?"

'King Billy', an Aboriginal guide, harangued and greatly irritated by the child-like whining of a group of miners on their way (circa 1850s) to the Ovens River diggings - became fed up with his charges' lack of bush 'nous':

> It was very dark and we marveled at him knowing the way he was going. Every now and then someone would ask him "How far?" till at last he said in an impatient voice "long way yet". About midnight through the dark bush he brought us to a shepherd's hut.[799]

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[797] CB Hall observed Aboriginal people take a red grub out from a grass tree, to which he was informed "was 'merrijig [very good] and 'likit sugar', with an assurance further ,that I was a 'stupid fellow' for not adopting it as an article of diet." Cited in: Halls Gap & Grampians Historical Society, Victoria's Wonderland. p.4

[798] Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. p.90

[799] Walker, Glenlyon Connections. p.227

A correspondent for the *Illustrated Melbourne Post* noted the hilarity the Aboriginal people on the Murray River enjoyed when they saw that some 'white fellows' had clumsily capsized their canoe.[800] Miners such as Edwin Middleton noted appreciably that 'their sense of humour and perception of the ridiculous is very keen. Nothing with a joke in it escapes them.'[801] Middleton's inclusion in his correspondence of a humorous anecdote featuring a laconic and satirical Aboriginal voice was not a historical anomaly:

> There was a party of men putting up a telegraph line when a black sauntered up to them with the easy air of an owner of the soil...after watching some time, he pointing to the wire overhead sung out "Fool mine think it white fellow" being asked why, still pointing to the posts and wire and said "You think it bullock stop along that one paddock. My word you plenty stupid."[802]

Oscar Comettant, a French journalist and visitor in the 1880s perceived that 'they have that sense of the ridiculous which can be so devastating in France. They will laugh for days over some mistake they have seen committed by a white man.'[803] Humour, Commetant observed of Aboriginal people, was a stratagem used to great effect against Englishmen who were critical and condescending towards them, adding that 'not even Voltaire himself could have replied with such droll ingenuity' as an Aboriginal man had done in response to being told '"You are an idiot...you can do none of the things we whites can.": "Excuse me," replied the Aborigine, hiding a mocking smile, as well as he could, "We blacks can imitate you whites when it comes to drinking, smoking, lying, stealing, or doing nothing at all."'[804] Gerard Krefft recorded a disparaging opinion held by Aboriginal informants on the Lower Murray

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[800] "Bark Canoes."
[801] Middleton, A Description of the Life and Times in Victoria in the 1860's by a Young Colonist.
[802] Middleton, A Description of the Life and Times in Victoria in the 1860's by a Young Colonist. pp.53-4
[803] Comettant, In the Land of Kangaroos and Gold Mines. pp.91-2
[804] Comettant, In the Land of Kangaroos and Gold Mines.

River towards the white man's propensity to work unceasingly: 'There are only two things which appear great fools in their eyes, namely a white man and a working bullock'.[805]

Many times the inability of non-Indigenous miners unable to cater for their own basic needs or the antics of whites was a source of amusement. It was probably incidents such as one recorded by Ned Peters during his journey to the Dunnoly diggings, which Aboriginal people entertained themselves with back at their camps.

> Kangaroo grass above our knees. Stopped suddenly, spoke to the native: "Where Picaninnie Well?" he pointed between his feet small mossy hole. Got pannican and pushed it down – delicious water. Some of the party brought pick and shovel and soon made a big hole. Plenty of water for all hands.'[806]

In Lawrence Struilby's recollections he includes several references to corroboree songs which 'mimicked the white man's ignorance of bush life, and his peculiar habits and vices,'[807] and also espied in their camps the great entertainment and humor they gained at the expense of 'any white man who was halt or lame, or in any way awkward or stupid, their mimicry of such was perfect.'[808] The subject of non-Indigenous people breaking their promises of payment for work performed also was the subject of a corroboree song, as was a song of 'joy for the release of convicts at a squatter's establishment, on expiration of their time.'[809]

> The Bamraman [unidentified location on the Murray River near Swan Hill] clan satirized a white man called Marsh, who employed them; but broke his word and did not pay. He always put them off by saying that the great rain (cobon walleen) had made his wagon (wheelbarrow) break down on the way. They tax

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[805] Krefft, "On the Manner and Customs of the Aborigines of the Lower Murray and Darling." p.359.
[806] Blake, ed., A Gold Digger's Diaries by Ned Peters. p.24
[807] Graham, ed., Observations and Experiences During 25 Years of Bush Life in Australia. p.125
[808] Graham, ed., Observations and Experiences During 25 Years of Bush Life in Australia. p.127
[809] Graham, ed., Observations and Experiences During 25 Years of Bush Life in Australia. p.126

him with lies (yamble), and threaten to no more wash his sheep (jumbuck) or track his horses (yarraman).[810]

An interesting riposte to the invaders was recorded by Alfred Joyce at Plaistow in central Victoria: 'On one occasion, when a black fellow had taken a square of bark from a tree in front of our hut, I remonstrated with him for mutilating the tree; he very quietly asked me if it was my tree, which I thought at the time was a little rough on the usurper.'[811] Similarly, the churning of the Murray River which interfered with their supply of fish prompted local Aboriginal people to ask Phillip Chauncy, a surveyor in the Goulburn district in the 1860s, to appeal to the Government for a bounty to be placed on river vessels payable to the Aborigines.[812]

FREQUENCY AND STATED RATIONALE

Some non-Indigenous people reported the frequency of visitations from Aboriginal people. James Morgan, a miner at Ballarat, was 'often visited by Aboriginals'[813]and Mrs. Campbell at Benalla, reported 'We frequently met the natives.'[814] Alfred Joyce, a squatter on Djadjawurrung country in central Victoria also noted 'Often in passing through the diggings township near us, I have seen them squatting about the streets or near the public house.'[815] William McLeish, a ten year old boy lost and walking home

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[810] Graham, ed., Observations and Experiences During 25 Years of Bush Life in Australia. pp.125-7

[811] James, ed., A Homestead History - Being the Reminiscences and Letters of Alfred Joyce of Plaistow and Norwood, Port Phillip 1843 To1864. p.73

[812].Chauncy wrote: 'A native of the Moira tribe informed me of the intention of himself and five other aborigines to proceed as a deputation to His Excellency the Governor, to request him to impose a tax of 10 pounds on each steamer passing up and down the Murray, to be expended in supplying food to the natives in lieu of the fish which had been driven away.' P Chauncy in Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.19

[813] H Morgan, Diary, SLV MS, Melbourne.

[814] Campbell, Rough and Smooth or Ho! For an Australian Goldfield. p.107

[815] James, ed., A Homestead History - Being the Reminiscences and Letters of Alfred Joyce of Plaistow and Norwood, Port Phillip 1843 To1864. p.78

on the fields of Ballarat (24 December, 1856) had a solitary but moving encounter with two Wathawurrung women.

> I heard human voices in the soft musical tones of the aboriginal tongue, and almost immediately after I saw a native woman sitting at the foot of a large white gum tree – her eyes were fixed on me with a cautious searching look and I never forgot the glow that burned in those eyes, but with a kindly look in them that reassured me I walked forward and she said something I did not understand and immediately the chopping was resumed over my head, and on looking up I saw another woman engaged in chopping a possum out of a branch...and gathering the game and blanket up, they walked away swiftly through the forest [Ballarat Common]. I saw no sign of any men or camp near at hand.[816]

Others noted the rationale for the visits. Ray Willis of Buninyong relayed a story told to him that dates back to the 1860s of how the "aboriginals used to come to his mother's house on the other side of the creek towards Mt. Edgerton, for fat. They used the fat not for cooking, but to rub on their bodies to keep themselves warm in winter."[817] Similarly the Hiscock family house in Buninyong (c.1850s) was paid 'frequent visits by royalty in the person of "King Billy", head of a small tribe of aborigines where they were supplied with food, which they were glad to obtain.'[818] Fear and trepidation were sometimes the initial response to visits by Aboriginal people, often followed by mutual kindness[819] as evidenced in the experiences of a family in East Gippsland (c.1858-9).

> When we children rushed in excitedly to tell our mother that a "whole lot" of blackfellows were coming, there was no doubt about her feelings. She quickly gathered some washing from the clothesline (fearing that a gaudy patchwork quilt would especially excite their cupidity); and then she gathered us all into the house to await developments. There were none; nothing happened. "Blackfellow sit down." They have a strong hereditary capacity for waiting. They took nothing belonging to us – hardly a chip of wood – but they made a

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[816] W McLeish, Memorandum of the Family of John Mcleish, Reminiscences, SLV MS, Melbourne.
[817] Willis, Aboriginal Archaeology of the Yendon-Lal Lal Area. p.1
[818] Hiscock, Descendants of Thomas Hiscock.
[819] The Sinclair family house at Clunes too was visited by 'the lubras and children' and received food Sinclair, Memoirs. p.5

> little fire and when eventually we had to appear, they only asked for a "big billy boil-em egg." When they were provided with our largest pot – really our washing boiler – they produced swan eggs in scores, and having boiled them, feasted and lay down; to disappear afterwards as quietly as they had come, quite pleased that all their requests for a "lil bit tchuga [sugar]," "a lil bit tea" had been gratified.[820]

Not all non-Indigenous miners had such close interactions with Aboriginal people or at least included their interactions with Aboriginal people in their correspondence. James Arnot on an unidentified goldfield recorded in his 1852 journal rather disappointedly that 'I have never seen a native nor a kangaroo yet.'[821] Many miners had only fleeting encounters. Miner, Owen Davies, wrote a letter from the goldfields at Spring Creek in the Ovens Valley in September 1853 to his nephew telling him that 'if you was here I would go with you now and then through the bush that you may see the natives and see their houses.'[822] Charles Eberlie noted on his way to the Yandoit diggings in 1854 that he 'saw some natives for the first time'[823] whilst Charles Foreman's solitary quip in 1861 of Aboriginal people in the Gordon area was: 'We see plenty of these, they are quite harmless'.[824] In contrast, other goldfield observers related a very confrontational scene, vividly illustrating both the racial tension and pronounced presence of Aboriginal people on the goldfields.

In the Loddon district James Doak's salutary note about Aboriginal people was that he would lock his house to prevent Aboriginal people from stealing sugar and other household stores[825] whilst Ned Peters on the Dunolly and district goldfields of central

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[820] Cited in Leslie and Cowie, eds., The Wind Still Blows: Early Gippsland Diaries. p.28
[821] Journal dated 23 August 1852 in Arnot, An Emigrants Journal.
[822] Davies, Papers.
[823] Eberlie, Diary.
[824] C Foreman, Letters, NLA MS, Canberra.
[825] J Randell, Kimbolton (Melbourne: Queensberry Press, 1976). p.17

Victoria recorded copious entries relating (presumably) to Djadjawurrung people on the diggings in 1855-6:

> We struck our tents and came to Sandy Creek [Tarnagulla]. I find there are a number of people here besides blackfellows...The natives have been very noisy all last night from drink given them by the diggers...The Blackfellows have visited this quarter again. They had a carrobine [corroboree] the other night and ever since throughout the whole of the nights are making awful noises...The natives who are knocking about the creek are very noisy during the night...the natives got some dozen sheets of bark for us...The natives were hallowing and yelling nearly all last night...We past some natives on our way [to Newbridge].[826]

Another observer on the goldfields, Surveyor Walter Woodbury, who was surveying in the Buninyong district, wrote to his mother in June 1853 about the close quarters he kept with a clan of Wathawurrung people. It is apparent that Woodbury had observed some of their activities with some avid interest, finding aspects of their culture by degrees adroit, repugnant and rudimentary.

> We have had a tribe of the native Blacks camped near us for the last week so that we have had an excellent opportunity of seeing how they live...they construct what they call miamias, consisting of two forked sticks placed in the ground with one stick running across the top of them, they then rest large pieces of bark or branches of trees on these which gives them a shelter from the wind. They lie all around their fires at night and all the covering they wear is a possum rug or a blanket thrown around them. Their principle food is the opossum which they find out by knocking on the trees and where they find a hollow sound they cut open the tree and so catch the opossum. They also kill [indigenous] turkeys, pigeons and parrots with the boomerang which they are very expert at throwing. When they are very hungry and can get nothing else they will pick up the spiders, beetles, cockroaches and ants and eat them.[827]

Ned Peters' and Walter Woodbury's experiences are arguably accurate approximations of what constituted most non-Indigenous people's interactions and

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[826] Blake, ed., A Gold Digger's Diaries by Ned Peters. pp.58-108
[827] W Woodbury, Letters, NLA MS, Canberra.

opinions of Aboriginal people on the Victorian goldfields. For those miners and mining town folk who did interact on a frequent or intermittent basis, it is probable that they enjoyed, and indeed, at times endured, a 'living together, living apart' relationship which the pastoralist era had been a precursor for. Historian David Goodman also contends that the written and visual records of the 1850s contain reminders that the non-Indigenous mining fraternity and Victorian Aboriginal people 'were often in close contact.'[828] Jack Loorham's reminiscences from the Orbost district reflect both an uncertainty and a remarkable affinity between the Kurnai and the Lohans:

> I was born 23rd October, 1863, at the Station House, Orbost...There were hundreds of blacks here at that time, and a great many of them came about a few days before I was born. There were so many that my mother was scared. However she soon learned that they had come to do homage to the white child they heard had been born. When my mother was well enough to get up, she sent for them. My mother sat with me in her lap. After that they held a corroboree and the next day they went away.[829]

John Bond, a miner at Benalla, also noted their proximity, ubiquity and very close associations with a number of non-Indigenous people.

> The natives (Blacks) are just as we see them represented. A few are now camped a little in front of this house. Benalla. There are always some in the township – women washing and so on. Men shooting ducks, stripping bark and co. for nobblers of spirit. They all are naturally of a cheerful disposition...Brandy was our favourite black man he was often in and out of the house in very free and easy fashion. All of us liked him.[830]

Oral history also corroborates Goodman's contention. Non-Indigenous family histories passed down from the mining period speak often of close relationships

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[828] Goodman, Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s. p.17

[829] 'Lohans' are a Kurnai term for non-Indigenous people. Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District. p.7

[830] Bond, Memoirs. pp.74-89

forged with Aboriginal identities. As a representative example, the Marsden-White family, who took up land in the Haddon-Cardigan region after their arrival on the Ballarat goldfields in 1852, has knowledge of their homestead and run's relationship to Wathawurrung sites and also to a local Wathawurrung identity called King Billy.

> The first homestead site was located on an existing aboriginal spring...There were a number of dairy farms based on the Bunkers Hill Ridge because of the aboriginal springs. Most of the little creeks draining off the ridge had their source at or near an aboriginal spring or soak. My grandfather told of aborigines in the bush on the Ridge [circa 1855]. He told of corroborees and he also told of aboriginal shelters and of an area where as a child, aboriginal bones could be found.[831]

A number of families in the wider Ballarat district including the Comrie, Marsden-White and Hiscock families are also the recipients of rich oral histories which speak of familial relationships with Aboriginal people in the area, not just physical sites or nameless 'aborigines'. Roy Comrie's family history has passed down oral memories of their relationship with a Wathawurrung elder commonly called King Billy or 'Mr. Mulla, as my father used to call King Billy'. According to Comrie family lore, Mr. Mulla often camped at their home on the Ballarat West Common, 'taught them many ways of their culture', visited significant sites, rode horses and sat at the family table with the Comrie family. The bond with Mr. Mulla had grown over an extended period of time and it was considered that 'King Billy was like a part of their family when they were growing up.'[832] The Coxall family history also contains several accounts that occurred at Buninyong which demonstrate that close links between the Wathawurrung clan and the non-Indigenous towns-folk had indisputably been forged.

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[831] Marsden and White, "Aboriginal Heritage".
[832] R Comrie, "King Billy," ed. Jill Blee (Ballarat: 2002).

> One of the Aboriginal women had trouble giving birth to a baby. My grandma and other ladies of the town went up to see if they could help. They took things with them to help but it was in vain, both mother and child died. They were buried near where the tannery was situated...My Uncle Tom lent one of the aborigines a Tommy axe to cut down a few trees for a shelter, but he didn't return it, Uncle Tom was always moaning about it. The Rev. Hastie was at the Presbyterian Church when King Billy presented him with a beautiful set of Aboriginal weapons in recognition of the townsfolk hospitality... Grandma used to bake bread for them and Uncle Tom said it kept them around the place.[833]

In the Newstead district too there are accounts such as the one recorded by Thomas Martin, a child on the diggings, which describe his family's anecdotal interactions with Djadjawurrung people, he knew by name.

> They were great cadgers and did well cadging old clothes etc. One big rough old fellow with bushy hair and long whiskers used to come with them...He lost his old hat at the pub and my father gave him an old Bell-topper which he wore for months. He had a girl with him about 12 years old. She used to do the begging. We gave her an old crinolin and skirt and put them on her and christened her Eliza. She thought she was a queen.[834]

For miners such as John Chandler the 'insistent begging' of the Aboriginal people (one of the most frequently described interactions between the two cultures) was more than a mere trifle, it was a trait that defined them as a race to be wary of.

> At the foot of Mt Franklin we passed a tribe of natives. There was a lot of lubras and picaninnies. We generally found it best to give them a wide berth, for they are such bold beggars that they will clean you out of all your tobacco, rum, tea and sugar, etc, and if you are alone and any way timid of them, then look out for yourself.[835]

Aboriginal people in Victoria demonstrated a propensity to relate with and interact with the non-Indigenous miners who had invaded their lands. They learnt the

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[833] Coxall, ed., Coxall Family History. p.109
[834] Martin, Early History of Newstead District.
[835] Cannon, ed., Forty Years in the Wilderness. p.111

language, speech and manners of the miners and tried to incorporate them into their cultural network through exchange, gifts, child minding, guiding, naming, invitations to cultural ceremonies and invoking of kinship rituals. There was clearly an Aboriginal expectation of being recompensed for use of land via gift-giving, concessions and acknowledgement that was not recognized by many non-Indigenous miners, leading to negative appraisals. Conversely many non-Indigenous perspectives of Aboriginal culture, emanating from living in close quarters with each other, were construed negatively such as 'begging', 'thieving' and 'nudity'. There were however some select non-Indigenous individuals in goldfields communities whose initially negative appraisals of Aboriginal people changed after stereotypical racial facades had been put aside enabling them to 'distinguish the features behind the black mask that had before enveloped them.' This chapter has demonstrated that in the historical records, though fragmentary, there are clear indicators that a dynamic of living closely together was prevalent on the goldfields of Victoria between Aboriginal people and non-Indigenous mining communities. This chapter has also sought to carefully consider the character and degree of the common positive and negative attitudes and perceptions of living in close proximity with each other and the appraisal changes which occurred, utilizing both the Aboriginal voices in the historical landscape and non-Indigenous accounts. In addition this chapter has made important contributions to our knowledge of the processes of acculturation that occurred in nineteenth century Victoria and has laid the fundament to directly challenge our previous erroneous belief that non-Indigenous people during the study period felt they had nothing to learn from Aboriginal people. The abundance of evidence presented in this chapter which illustrates the fresh way (a shift paradigmatically) in which some miners

viewed Aboriginal people has ironically not been taken up by goldfield historians in particular, and economic historians in general.

No doubt the presence of thousands of miners was a subject of considerable discussion within Aboriginal society, and although we will never be able to comprehend all the parameters, we are fortunate that we have sufficient sources to chronicle some jigsaw pieces of the living-together story raised in this chapter. The importance of this synergism that occurred on the goldfields cannot be overstated. Not only is the traditional story of gold (characterized by an ideologue that the 'Aborigines were swept aside') been shown to be a shallow 'schister'[836] but there is now a pressing need to consider more closely evidence that the dominant Colonial culture acculturated elements of Aboriginal culture to a greater degree than has previously been acknowledged. The significance of Aboriginal influence on the goldfields has been overshadowed in generalist gold histories in favour of the role of Aboriginal people off the goldfields and the social and environmental changes wrought upon Aboriginal people by the gold mining epoch, a topic taken up in successive chapters.

[836] Goldfields parlance for a dud shaft.

CHAPTER NINE: OFF THE GOLDFIELDS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the role of Aboriginal people off the goldfields.[837] Previous chapters have demonstrated that Aboriginal roles on the goldfields, far from being obscure, were at times pivotal in the story of gold. It shall be demonstrated that off the goldfields they also performed roles that were at times integral to the welfare of the Victorian community. This chapter shall also address the paradox of, on the one hand, Aboriginal workers off the goldfields being universally highly valued and considered of great benefit by non-Indigenous pastoralists and farmers in the study period, and, on the other hand, the evidence of great disparagement also being held towards Aboriginal workers.

On first appearances the first decade of the gold rush period (1850s) began badly for Victorian Aboriginal people. Following on from the recommendations of the 1849 New South Wales Legislative Council's inquiry into the state of Aborigines, which called for the abolition of the Aboriginal Protectorate and offered no other coherent policy, the largely pauperized Aboriginal population, who had been shunted from their traditional lands had little alternative other than dependent relationships with non-Indigenous pastoralists.[838] Clark has pointed out that Aboriginal people's acceptance of temporary wage labor was a double edged sword, as it afforded Aboriginal people the opportunity to reside on their natal estates, yet it also afforded an additional opportunity of increasing the rate of their exploitation.[839] However, whilst the chronic labour shortage (in the towns and on the land) created by the

[837] Because a number of pastoral runs were located in auriferous areas this chapter will examine Aboriginal roles both geographically off the goldfields and not participating on the goldfields.
[838] Aboriginal people such as Billy Leigh formed very strong and long lasting relationships with pastoralists. See: I Wynd, So Fine a Country: A History of the Shire of Corio (Geelong, Shire of Corio 1981). pp.238-9
[839] Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria. p.145

goldrush has been chronicled[840] historians have been unhurried in their description of Aboriginal workers on the pastoral runs and farms of Victoria during this chaotic period of labour history.

Historian Richard Broome's influential work on '*Aboriginal workers on south-eastern frontiers*', has identified that Aboriginal people were consistently represented as poor or indifferent workers off the goldfields due to a raft of factors including their 'roving disposition' and their cultural emphasis on relationships.[841] Clark has also pointed to the critical importance of acknowledging Aboriginal people's kinship system and land attachment as being a prime motivational force in how perceptions of work patterns are discerned.[842] Some evidence for this is found in a report from Police Magistrate for the Sale and Alberton Districts, Andrew McCrae, to the Colonial Secretary in March 1852, on the condition of Aboriginal people in the Gippsland region. McCrae reported that all the Aboriginal people in his assigned district had served the 'full term of their employment' for a 'large' payment of money.[843] Moreover he stresses three tiers of conduct employers of Aboriginal people should abide by if they were to expect Aboriginal people to labor for them in an earnest manner. McCrae, a pastoralist on the Mornington Peninsula, was very familiar with the importance placed by Aboriginal people on relationships with the people they worked with, after having worked very closely with the local Boonwurrung clan resident on the pastoral station he had taken up in the 1840s.

> I would beg that it may be borne in mind that the employers, the persons mainly interested in the labor of the natives, always worked in the field with them, and

[840] Serle, The Golden Age - a History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861, Bate, Victorian Gold Rushes, Benjamin and Caelli, "Rush to Rebellion: Victorian Gold Rushes 1851-1854,"vol.
[841] Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers."
[842] See: Clark, 'That's My Country Belonging to Me'. Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria. Pp.177-211
[843] McCrae in: Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address. p.10

saw, as it was evidently their interest to see, that the blacks had their rations according to agreement, and that they were not ill-treated by their fellow-laborers the whites.

It would therefore appear, if I may be allowed to offer an opinion (which I do after a residence of twelve years in the colony, and many opportunities of studying the habits and dispositions of the Aborigines), that in favourable circumstances, such as I have brought under your notice, where the employer offers a fair remuneration, [rations, tobacco, 2 pounds, a gun worth thirty shillings, one blanket, three shirts, one pair of trousers, a cap, and about two and sixpence worth of powder and shot] *keeps faith* [McCrae's emphasis] with the black natives and *works with them*, that their labor, not much if at all inferior in reaping to that of the whites, may be available.[844]

McCrae's wisdom on this matter would prove to be critical for many pastoralists as the official discovery of gold at Clunes in 1851 acted like a magnet for the vast majority of the population including sheep station workers who left their jobs in droves.[845] One pastoralist lamented: 'With every fresh gold find matters became worse for the stockowner... In fact it became almost impossible to carry on the work of the place as more and more men went off to the diggings.'[846] As all hands sought to join the throng finding the 'democratic metal',[847] it offered Aboriginal people who remained on their traditional lands, especially those whose estates were not located near auriferous fields, new prospects of increased station employment, increased wages, better working conditions and an appreciably greater estimation and admiration of their skills. According to the figures submitted in 1852-3 by the Commissioners for Crown Lands on Aboriginal populations in the various districts across Victoria, an estimated 1,500 Aboriginal people were employed on stations and

[844] McCrae in: Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address. p.10

[845] Roger Therry, a large landholder in NSW and Victoria noted how in 1854 'owing to the great immigration in consequence of the gold discoveries...we were obliged to have recourse to the Chinese and native labourers, or we should never have been able to keep our flocks together.' Therry, Reminiscences of Thirty Years Residence in New South Wales. p.265

[846] Palmer, ed., William Moodie: A Pioneer of Western Victoria. pp.74-5. Sherer commented that 'their value, in many instances must have been incalculable at a period when nearly all white pastoral labour was suspended from the greater attraction of the goldfields' Sherer, The Gold-Finder of Australia. p.269

[847] Historian Weston Bate coined the phrase 'democratic metal'.

were unanimously considered to be 'of considerable service'.[848] In one district it was stated 'that the whole of the tribes were employed by settlers within the district'.[849] One 1850s observer noted how the gold discoveries 'seem to have been highly beneficial in their operation to the Australian natives' adding that many employers, who before 'despised them', were now in a position where they had need to 'invite their services, and to deal with them on equitable and liberal terms.'[850] Frank Shellard, a gold digger around Omeo and the Ovens Valley, described how some stations were 'entirely worked by coloured people' and added that almost all the drovers in that region were 'native blacks or halfcasts as they were all bold and daring riders and good bushmen and could pick up any stragglers [cattle] they might fall in with on their journey.'[851]

During the early phases of alluvial gold mining in Victoria, Aboriginal people enjoyed an importance as a labour force which had not been seen since the first period of colonization almost twenty years prior. From across Victoria reports of their utmost importance as a work force, which enabled the pastoralists to continue in the face of a labor shortage, were prolific.[852] 'It is a fact I should like to state, well known to me,'

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[848] JF Foster wrote 'many display much intelligence, and are frequently of great use to the settlers in shepherding and washing their sheep, or assisting at harvest time'. J Foster, The New Colony of Victoria Formerly Port Phillip...And Introducing All the Latest Information to December 1851 (London: Trelawney Saunders, 1851). p.23. Colin Campbell informed La Trobe that had it not been for the aid of his Aboriginal workers, lambing would not have been completed. See Campbell in Bride, ed., Letters from Victorian Pioneers. James Richardson at 'Gorrinn' also used Aboriginal labour extensively in this period. Cited in Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria. p.99

[849] Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address.

[850] Religious Tract Society, Australia: Its Scenery, Natural History, Resources and Settlements with a Glance at Its Goldfields. p.178

[851] Shellard, Reminiscences of an Old Digger.

[852] The officer in Charge of the Goulburn Aboriginal Protectorate Station reported that in 1852 it was 'impossible to retain their services as shepherds' on the Protectorate Sation as they were 'scattered over the adjacent country amongst the neighbouring stations.' D Horsburgh, Correspondence, PROV, Melbourne.. JC Thomson, Crown Lands Commissioner also noted in 1854 that 'Among the setllers they have been employed as in former years assisting at washing and shearing; at which occupations they received wages at the rate of 1 pound per week.' Thomson, Correspondence.. Also see Priestley', Warracknabeal- a Wimmera Centenary. and Sherer who noted that 'owing to the gold-

wrote former Assistant Protector of Aborigines in Victoria, Edward Stone Parker, 'that, at the time when the country was in a state of universal excitement on the outbreak of the gold mining, there were several stations where no shepherds were left but aboriginal shepherds.'[853] At Barham Station, Rowland Shelley employed 'the blacks as boundary riders and shepherds and found them very faithful and reliable.'[854] Other station owners and managers were equally effusive about their Aboriginal workers. AC Cameron, at 'Terinallum' in the western district of Victoria, disdainfully wrote in a series of letters between 1851-8 of the severe labour shortage crippling the pastoral industry, only relieved by Aboriginal workers:

> [F]or it is all Gold in this neighbourhood – every body totally Ignorant about wool...the shearers are doing their work moderately well, and I have to be pretty civil; the most of my shed men are my faithful darkies...William, Cocky, Jamie, Billy Downie, Charlie...I have for sometime been shepherding one flock myself, and have another to be thrown on my hands on Monday; but if two of the Blacks that have promised come tomorrow I will be able to jog on a few weeks longer without doubling the flocks...do you think you could get me any Bullock drivers for the wool? I see no chance of getting any here...I wish you would give my Blackfellows a hint if you see them about the Leigh [River]...I am washing the sheep now. I have got a lot of Blacks engaged for washing, they are doing very well as yet; I have them all under a written agreement for Six Shillings per week.[855]

Other pastoralists' reminiscences, such as William Moodie's, mirrored AC Cameron's experiences. Moodie wrote that 'We were used to seeing blacks working on the

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discovery...natives in great numbers had to be employed in tending sheep, hut keeping, and wool washing'. Sherer, The Gold-Finder of Australia. p.269

[853] Parker cited in Goodman, Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s. p.20. Charles Panton at 'Mangalore' Station bemoaned that all his servants 'cleared out' for the diggings and that 'for the time a black fellow and his wife, the so called chief of the tribe looked after the whole Station during my absence.' Panton, The Autobiography of J.A Panton. p.37

[854] Unknown, Blacks on Barham Station (Denbeigh) Murray River.

[855] Orders drawn in November 1854 demonstrate that Aboriginal people made up 75% of Terinallum Station's workforce. See: Brown, ed., Clyde Company Papers Volumes 1-5. pp.104-353

stations' and added that he 'saw a few at each station' on their journey from Melbourne to the Western District.[856] Moodie was not backward in his admiration and thankfulness of having a permanent Aboriginal labor force stating that 'Jimmy Power and his lubra remained with us till his death...He was a sight to watch on a shearing floor, picking up and spreading fleeces being his forte...We were very pleased to see them as we had a lot of work to do.'[857] Testimony of the extent to which Aboriginal workers were valued in this period can best be gauged by a letter written by AC Cameron from 'Terinallum' in September 1852, where he complains bitterly of his Aboriginal workers being poached by a fellow squatter: 'Neither shearers nor any one else are making their appearance yet, and to make the matter worse FRANCIS ORMOND ESQUIRE [Cameron's emphasis] has engaged my Blackfellows. It has made me so savage.'[858]

The skills of the Aboriginal workers (both male and female)[859] were very well regarded by pastoralists. They were deemed to be highly proficient in a range of skills including washing and tracking sheep, bullock drivers, shearers,[860] fire fighters,[861] as

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[856] Palmer, ed., William Moodie: A Pioneer of Western Victoria. p.72

[857] Palmer, ed., William Moodie: A Pioneer of Western Victoria. pp.72-3. Similarly, Charles Burchett noted the employment of 'a blackfellow named '"Sampson", who is very useful on the establishment, fetching and tracking horses, etc'. Burchett, Letters. p.76

[858] Cameron to Lewis, 24 September 1852, cited in Brown, ed., Clyde Company Papers Volumes 1-5. p.342

[859] As in other States of Australia the pastoral industry was dependent on Victorian Aboriginal women in the pastoral industry to a very large degree. This fact is forcefully illustrated by WN Gray, Crown Commissioner of Lands in the Portland Bay District who noted 'owing to the great scarcity of labour caused by the servants all going to the Gold Mines, there are none but natives to look after the sheep...if the men go they will leave the women to do the work.' Cited in Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address.p.25. One observer recorded 'some Aboriginal women were employed as shepherds on Captain Cain's station at Number 3 Creek, Springfield' in central Victoria. Cited in: Reid, When Memory Turns the Key: A History of the Shire of Romsey. p.2. Pastoral worker, James Sinclair noted the employment of 'lubras' in sheep mustering and general rouseabout work on properties across Victoria. See: Sinclair, Memoirs.p.18. In pastoralist's reminiscences in the Charlton district it was recalled that 'Aborigines of both sexes were employed on the stations'. CF Stowe at the East Charlton Station noted in 1869 that a 'large group of aborigines and lubras were camped, looking for work during the shearing.' Cited in: Cadzow and Wright, Charlton in the Vale of the Avoca. p.3. See also: Lang, The Australian Emigrants Manual. p.106.; Panton, The Autobiography of J.A Panton. p.36.

[860] The full employment of Aboriginal people during peak times in the pastoral industry is evidenced by a letter received from the Yelta Aboriginal Station advising that 'we got no blacks they are all gone

guides across unfamiliar country,[862] general hands,[863] wool pressers, scourers, rouses,[864] carters, musterers, timber cutters and fencers.[865] Typical of the gratitude for the Aboriginal bush workers was F Jones' effusive praise in a letter to the Commissioner of Crown Lands in 1853. Jones wrote: 'It is no figure of speech to assert that wanting their services I could neither have washed my sheep nor secured my wheat crop this season, nor indeed could I have carried on the ordinary work of the station without their assistance. Two lads have shepherded 2000 sheep since the month of May last; they have certainly proved themselves more useful generally in time of need than I ever expected.'[866] AB Batey at Sunbury concurred, adding that he had heard it said 'there were some squatters who preferred blacks as stockmen' as they were 'good horsemen'.[867] Newspaper correspondents from remote areas in Victoria attested to the fact that 'blacks were employed and they turned out their shorn sheep in a far more satisfactory manner than the majority of the whites so engaged.'[868] It was not just on stations a long way from the diggings where

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shearing'. F Worinthe, "Church Mission Station," *Argus* 5 October 1864. p.5. JD Mereweather, an itinerant preacher (1850-53) observed Aboriginal groups camped at every station he visited in his travels who were 'trusted to take care of a flock of sheep, now that white labour, in consequence of the diggings, was so very scarce'.Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. p.190. Sinclair too noted the prevalence of 'numbers of fine strong built blacks' working on pastoral properties. Sinclair, Memoirs. pp.18,21,27

[861] AC Cameron noted having taken 'as many of my Black troop as I could mount after a fire' in 1854 and again in 1858 'I have had a lot of blacks with me at the fires.' Brown, ed., Clyde Company Papers Volumes 1-5. p.215,499

[862] Many pastoralists took the 'precaution of providing a black fellow' to station staff traversing across remote runs. See: McK, Old Days and Gold Days. p.19. Various stations correspondence in Brown, ed., Clyde Company Papers Volumes 1-5. pp.429,534,589. Sugden, Pioneering Life in Outback Stations of Victoria.. A stock track cut from Bonang to Goongerah in East Gippsland was made possible with the aid of an Aboriginal man named 'Little Billy'. Cited in: O'Bryan, Pioneering East Gippsland. p.29.

[863] At Bolwarrah Station (c.1860s) 'There were still a few natives about [Djadjawurrung]' and some of them were 'employed on the station'. McK, Old Days and Gold Days. p.11

[864] Palmer, ed., William Moodie: A Pioneer of Western Victoria.

[865] In the Dimboola district Aboriginals were employed to fell mallee for fencing and timber cutters . See; Longmire, Nine Creeks to Albacutya - a History of the Shire of Dimboola. p.28,47. Palmer, ed., William Moodie: A Pioneer of Western Victoria.

[866] F Jones to CJ Tyers in Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address. p.21

[867] Batey, Reminiscences. p.99. In the Orbost district too there is recognition that Aboriginal people were 'highly esteemed and skilful stockman'. Cited in Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District. p.8

[868] Pastoral Times, "Lake Victoria," *Argus* 17 March 1863. p.7

Aboriginal labour was of paramount importance. Pastoralists whose land was located in auriferous regions such as Buangor and Gorrin also observed that Aboriginal labour was critical.[869] Some measure by which their economic value was regarded can be seen in the wages which Aboriginal people were paid. At various stations it was noted that Aboriginal workers were sometimes paid the same rate as non-Indigenous workers.[870] William Thomas noted in his half yearly return that the mode of remuneration for their labour across the counties of Bourke, Mornington and Evelyn was 'precisely as white laboring men, in money and rations'.[871] Samuel Mossman and Thomas Bannister, two writers who wrote a narrative of their experiences in the early 1850s, were informed by a number of squatter informants that since the 'absorption of white labour by the gold diggings they [Aboriginal people] have proved themselves *useful labourers* at *remunerative wages* as shepherds, stockmen 'and otherwise'. With a degree of incredulousness, Mossman and Bannister revealed that squatters' successes in retaining their 'most valuable' workers was due, they were told, to squatters who 'treated them just as he would treat a white man – *he paid them*; and thus he made it their interest to labour steadily'.[872] The reluctance shown by Aboriginal people to work under squatters who did not comply with the payment of

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[869] See: Bride, ed., Letters from Victorian Pioneers, Oulton, A Valley of the Finest Description - a History of the Shire of Lexton, Banfield, Like the Ark: The Story of Ararat.

[870] At 'Terinallum' Station there is a wide disparity between workers wages but it would appear that Aboriginal workers such as 'Jamie, Little John, Robin Hood and Cocky' were enjoying relatively high wages for the period November 1854, of up to 6 pounds 18 shillings. See: Brown, ed., Clyde Company Papers Volumes 1-5. p. 151,192. William Moodie noted 'I always paid any blackfellows working for me...The men insisted on being paid for their wood-cutting in white money [gold] – and got it.' Palmer, ed., William Moodie: A Pioneer of Western Victoria. pp.18,73. Crown Land Commissioners and other officials such as William Thomas noted the 'facility with which money can be obtained' by Aboriginal people in their employment upon stations. Thomson, Correspondence. John Aitken reported to the 1858 SCVLC those employed as shearers and reapers were paid in most instances, the same rate as the 'white man'. Victorian Government, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines,; Together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices. p.35 Also see Beveridge ledgers, cited in: Gannan, "A Patriarch of Old."

[871] W Thomas in Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address. p.15

[872] Mossman and Bannister also relate how a pastoralist droving sheep overland was 'assisted by ten of the Murray river blacks. His plan of treatment to them was similar to that in the other instance we have related. He dealt with them in the manner *they themselves considered just.*'Mossman and Bannister, Australia, Visited and Revisited. pp.128-9,295

standard wages for Aboriginal workers may explain the contradiction in statements made by some pastoralists such as Alfred Joyce, Alexander Brock and Captain John Hepburn who remarked on their absence from their runs whilst other pastoralists such as Colin Campbell and Charles Panton observed their presence on squatting runs in large groups at times.[873]

Their intrinsic value to the non-Indigenous squatters can also be interpreted by the relationships formed and the integral trust which developed in some circumstances.[874] Many non-Indigenous bush workers, such as Robert Gow, expressed in their journals the widespread non-Indigenous perception of the time that the Aborigines were innately incapable of making the transition to 'our civilisation', yet juxtaposed such sentiments with statements such as 'They are apt scholars, many speak English well, can ride, drive stock, cook; and dress themselves like Europeans'.[875]

George Sugden's perspective, whilst not necessarily being representative, (though over his lifetime he worked for some of the most prominent squatters across two States),[876] is an interesting example of how the social roles of both non-Indigenous and Aboriginal people were – at times uncharacteristically topsy-turvy in an industry where Aboriginal skills and knowledge bases were considered albeit grudgingly superior. Sugden's reminiscences of pioneering life in Victoria are peppered with

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[873] Pastoralists who had developed strong relationships with local Aboriginal people recorded groups or individuals would take up residence such as at 'Mount Shadwell', 'Nareeb Nareeb' and 'Merrang'. See: Mortlake Historical Society, Pastures of Peace. pp.56-7

[874] Katherine McK reminisced about the 'blacks' warming themselves by the house fire, being formally introduced and teaching about bush foods and bush lore. See: McK, Old Days and Gold Days. pp.11-12,20,78-9. George Sugden claimed that he had spent so much time working and living together that he was able to speak in 'the black language well'. Sugden, Pioneering Life in Outback Stations of Victoria. pp.131-2. An unusual case was heard in Melbourne concerning Donald McLeod, a squatter who wished to 'remove' an Aboriginal named 'Handy Edward' to Western Australia in 1874. McLeod was being prosecuted for 'removing an aboriginal native of Victoria without written consent of the responsible Minister of the Crown'. The defendant, McLeod, submitted evidence which proved that 'the black fellow in question was anxious to go with him'. "Court Case," *Argus* 23 January 1874.

[875] Gow, Journal.

[876] Sugden made reference to many stations including those belonging to Learmonth, Elder, Scott, Turnbull, Budd, Robertson, Samuel Wilson and James Cochran.

references to over-employed Aboriginal people being the mainstay of station life[877] whose tasks included providing an essential variety of fresh foods, cooking and being servants, providing sexual services, performing the onerous task of sheep washing, mustering in areas that were dangerously inhospitable, tracking lost non-Indigenous workers and retrieving valuable errant stock. Sugden's experience informs us that on remote Victorian stations he was 'quite in his [Aboriginal aide's] hands and knew that as long as I stuck to him I was safe'. Interestingly, Sugden relates a series of events whereupon he acknowledges without reservation the vast superiority of his Aboriginal co-worker and comes to the painful pragmatic conclusion that work and survival in the bush was a great race and class leveler.

> I was given a half caste named Davis to help us. He was a splendid stockman, none better. We lived together and slept in the one tent...Though I did not like cooking for blacks...[Sugden reluctantly ended up cooking for Davis as] I saw it was the best way...I never saw a man use a whip like Davis. Within a week Davis had the horses so trained that they would come up to the tent and stand till I had picked out the required horses and then move quietly away to feed.[878]

Though non-Indigenous bush workers and pastoralists clearly perceived Victorian Aboriginal bush workers as the finest workers from a skill and knowledge base, there was a barrier to their entry into the non-Indigenous pantheon of bush worker mythology that Russell Ward wrote of in his seminal work 'The Australian Legend'.

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[877] Sugden wrote of how the sheep's wool was washed on the sheep's back, 'the blacks doing the work with a white overseer'. Very frequently Sugden was ordered to go and find lost bushmen and stock with a 'black boy'. In reality Sugden was fully cognizant of who was leading whom. Sugden recorded that the 'blacks were doing all the work' on the cattle station, that the non-Indigenous bushmen 'each had black women for housekeepers, and plenty of black men to help them, and they used to keep the white men in plenty of fish.' Sugden, Pioneering Life in Outback Stations of Victoria. pp.72-132. In a similar vein PC Buckley, a pastoralist in the Gippsland region employed a number of Aboriginal people (Black Tommy, Browny, Darby, Dairy-man, Bobby, Charley, Black George and many unidentified 'blacks' and 'gins') in a wide variety of jobs including potato picking, reaping wheat, bark cutting, driving stock to Melbourne, fencing, bullock driving, mustering, splitting timber, ploughing, and general stock workers. See entries from August 1857 to February 1865 in PC Buckley, Journal, RHSV Ms, Melbourne.

[878] Sugden, Pioneering Life in Outback Stations of Victoria.

The barrier was the Aboriginal bush workers' steadfast refusal (and at times active exclusion) to behave like English country workers under the auspices of a genial pastoral overlord.[879] NA Fenwick, Crown Commissioner of Lands in 1852, wrote of the Aboriginal bush workers with a deal of frustration 'they will work only when they choose', a sentiment echoed by other Crown Land Commissioners in Victoria.[880] Robert Gow, though waxing effusively about Aboriginal workers' legendary bush-work acumen is typical in adding with some exasperation: 'But no gifts, no kindness, no education, no comforts, nothing can win them from the chasm of their wild nomadic life.'[881] Gow and many others failed to discern Aboriginal people actively choosing to be two-way people,[882] - that is opting to balance their traditional lifestyles with some participation in the non-Indigenous economic milieu - but merely perceived Aboriginal people as having a biological predisposition towards what they considered a reverting back to a 'savage existence'. Gow describes what he thought to be an inalienable tendency as a 'fit that comes on them'. Other observers of Aboriginal bush workers understood there were legal and cultural imperatives, or extrinsic factors motivating their work patterns. WN Gray, Commissioner of Crown

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[879] Historian Richard Broome persuasively argues that Russell Ward's *The Australian Legend* (1958) 'celebrates the roving, independent stance of rural workers as the seed bed of Australian egalitarianism, but similar Aboriginal behaviour is never associated with any nationalist mythology of worker independence, as it might well be.' Broome, "Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers." p.219 Broome's call to scholarly action remains largely ignored. Interest in this angle of critique failed to materialize in Nile, ed., The Australian Legend and Its Discontents.

[880] NA Fenwick in the Bourke District, CJ Tyers in the Gippsland District and EB Addis in the Grant District all reported their immense usefulness to farmers, pastoralists and others since the gold rush, but all avowed the Aboriginal worker's reluctance to stop from their traditional economies. See: Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address.

[881] Gow, Journal. Edwin Middleton considered that 'there seems to be a dislike in all the Blacks to do anything in the shape of work' but ironically adds 'unless it is a kangaroo hunt, or assist to break in a buckjumper.' Middleton, A Description of the Life and Times in Victoria in the 1860's by a Young Colonist.. Responses to a circular letter sent out to pastoralists and officials in 1858 enquiring about Aboriginal people's ability to live more 'civilized and fixed habits' was met with a common refrain such as Mr Lewis who opined 'The love of change appears engrained into their very nature'. Victorian Government, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines,; Together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices.

[882] Sherer noted that the 'great objection to them would seem to have been their migratory habits, which prevented them from remaining in one employment for any length of time.' Sherer, The Gold-Finder of Australia. p.269 Noted anthropologist AP Elkin termed this type of delicate equilibrium as leading a 'double role'.

Lands in the Portland Bay District, noted this in February 1853: 'The settlers are kind to them, and will at any time give them employment; but no dependence can be placed on their remaining for any period, as their laws make it imperative upon them to attend various meetings of tribes to go through certain ceremonies...and no persuasion or remuneration would be the means of making them remain.'[883] Some pastoralists, through their long associations with Aboriginal people, such as Peter Beveridge near Swan Hill, understood and accommodated to some degree that a great number of Aboriginal people were neither dependent on non-Indigenous people's material goods nor willing to forgo their Aboriginal cultural imperatives for a life of dreary servitude to a class that subverted them to the rank of a servant. Pastoralists such as Beveridge accepted this facet of Aboriginal culture as one would accept another culture's limitations that imposed on station work.[884] Charles Tyers, too, assented to the necessary flexibilities that Aboriginal workers required to perform in two economies, noting: 'Two of the Plains tribe have been in my service for several months, one as cook and waiter and the other as messenger; they made themselves generally useful and behaved remarkably well, but I have been recently obliged to accede to their request for permission to return to their tribe.[885]

Typically though, many observers such as William Thomas, Guardian of Aborigines, reported with great despair and disbelief Aboriginal workers' unswerving adherence to maintaining their cultural integrity and worker independence by strongly shunning attempts to mould them into rural factory fodder.

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[883] WN Gray to Col. Sec. in Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address. p.25

[884] Beveridge highlights the dichotomy in his Aboriginal worker's life in his writings. Beveridge wrote: 'Nothing in the shape of a bribe will tempt them to forgo a chance of obtaining *taarp* [a sweet bush food only available at certain periods of the year], and no matter how urgently their services may be required at the time they will take themselves off all the same, even though there may be a chance of their forfeiting wages already earned by so doing...' Cited in Gannan, "A Patriarch of Old." p.18

[885] CJ Tyers in Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address. p.21

> All efforts, however, to further improve their condition, have been tried without avail. I have pressed, and the farmers and others also have urged their becoming as we are, and not merely in work and diet; but to stop in houses and open convenient places at night, comfortably clad and stretched, is what they will not hear of; the hook, axe, or brindle down, and all further of civilization for the day is over; off goes apparel, and they bask under the canopy of heaven as in their primitive wildness, evidently enjoying their freedom from encumbrance; nor do I conceive any further advancement beyond what they have obtained practicable to those in the settled districts, nor have they any desire to be meddled with further. Such is their wandering propensity that all the kindness, entreaty of persuasion cannot secure them one day beyond their determination; and they have latterly been particularly cautious how they make bargains for labour on this account.[886]

Thomas' observations were a product of his Wesleyan Missionary convictions and from long experience working and living for the Aboriginal people in his role as the Assistant Protector of Aborigines in the Western Port district for almost fifteen years. His intent was not merely to inform the Colonial Secretary but also to influence future Government policy. For a decade during the 1850s, the temporary acute demand for Aboriginal labour, due to the alluvial gold rushes drawing away the non-Indigenous labour from the land, coincided with a period of relative inattention by the Government towards Aboriginal policy.

It has been demonstrated that Aboriginal workers off and on the goldfields were universally highly valued and considered of great benefit by non-Indigenous pastoralists and farmers in the study period. It is equally evident that there was a great deal of disparagement held towards Aboriginal workers due to their 'roving disposition' and their steadfast refusal to stay in the one location any longer than they saw fit to, and subsequently Aboriginal workers were alternately over employed, under employed and unemployed according to primarily Aboriginal cultural dictates

[886] W Thomas in: Victorian Government, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines,; Together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices.

and the seasonal nature of the industry they chose to engage in. It has been shown that the study of Aboriginal labour relations off the goldfields in Victoria during the nineteenth century has been deficient and also that this oversight has not been due to a shortage of source material. This chapter has gone some way to answering Broome's call for a closer examination of Aboriginal contribution to the 'Australian worker legend' and has clearly discerned that there are strong grounds to support the supposition that Aboriginal workers' had a significant role in shaping the iconic bush worker legend.

CHAPTER TEN: SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

This chapter seeks to contribute to the discussion of the level and character of the immense social and environmental changes which directly impacted on Aboriginal people in Victoria during the study period. It also sets out to demonstrate that the goldfields were an inherently violent and dangerous landscape where Aboriginal people suffered greatly from sexual abuse (and subsequent venereal diseases), inter-racial and inter-necine violence, and on occasion perpetrated violence towards non-Indigenous mining communities. Acts of violation such as desecration of graves and the interference by non-Indigenous people in Aboriginal affairs on the goldfields by individual miners and mining communities are examined and also some instances of Aboriginal people who sought to bring their own perspectives and strategies into discussions on the issues affecting their people such as alcohol abuse.

Whilst the majority of commentators writing in the gold period enthusiastically extolled the Victorian goldfields as relatively free of the violence common on the Californian goldfields, which had been smeared with the taint of lawlessness and vigilante styled justice, historians such as David Goodman have peered into the historical records and now insist upon an 'edgier interpretation' of Victoria's goldfields histories as well.[887] An examination of newspaper reports and court records of the early gold rush period bears out Goodman's argument. The Victorian goldfields and the surrounding townships were a natural magnet not just for the multitude of honest, hard-working gold seekers who, driven by the lust for gold, had left their

[887] Goodman's 'edgier interpretation' of gold field history writing is a response to a 'three cheers' analysis by other historians who neglected the negative reception bestowed upon goldfields society. For further discussion see: Goodman, "Making an Edgier History of Gold.", Goodman, Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s, Goodman, "Reading Gold-Rush Travellers' Narratives."

families and communities behind, but also for the flotsam and jetsam of a Colonial society built upon penal servitude. Several generations of Australian Colonial society by the 1850s had either lived alongside the brutalized convict class or were closely aligned with them as family, friends or fellow workers. Compounding this Dickensian demographic in Australian society was the inherently dangerous, avaricious and precarious nature of the workplace which people flocked to unwittingly. Testimony of how 'nasty, brutish and short' life at the goldfields was as a workplace is underscored by how inured miners and other commentators became to what would now be termed horrific murders and industrial accidents.[888] Archival records reveal that gold rush society in Victoria, particularly in the early alluvial period, was for many people a solitary world turned upside down - where sickness, robbery, assault and murder followed in the train of endemic alcohol abuse and a negligible presence of security.[889] Amongst a party of diggers who had over-landed from Adelaide was Edward Snell, who described the scene at Mt Alexander that greeted them in March 1852:

> Thousands upon thousands of tents extending through the gullies for about 10 miles in every direction, lots of stores distinguished by flags, and slaughter houses which might be nosed a mile off, enough to breed a fever in the place- the ground full of immense holes, many of them 30 feet deep, and the surface cut up by carts and midleg deep in dust. Ruffianly unshaved vagabonds strolling about with gallows plainly written in their countenances and the creek thronged with cradles and tin pans, and fellows washing in every direction.[890]

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[888] One miner expressed his dismay at the goldfields violence thus: 'Society is in an awful state at these diggings; four murders within the last month. On the night before I left the diggings a man was shot at in an adjoining tent'. Cited in Prout, An Illustrated Handbook of the Voyage to Australia. p.71. A number of diarists in the goldfields period were extremely nonchalant about the deaths and accidents that befell people in their midst. Patrick Coady Buckley kept a journal for almost 30 years between 1844 and 1872 which includes a reference on 20 December 1858 which reads: 'John Bourke died apparently of apoplexy whilst going from my dairy to home, a little showery and windy.' Buckley, Journal.

[889] Serle calculates that, from mid 1852, 'eight out of ten diggers made no more money than the equivalent of reasonable wages, paid their way, or lost money.' Serle, The Golden Age - a History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861. p.85

[890] Griffiths, ed., The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell. p.278

The records of violence and murder against Aboriginal people by non-Indigenous people during the gold rush period are very extensive.[891] Surveyor, John Wilkinson, recalled the inherently violent ambience of the goldfields:

> Here [Nicholson River crossing near present day Bairnsdale] in 1856 Charles Marshall erected a hotel and store...The store was popular with the diggers but it met a sad end. Two Aborigines stole groceries and spirits from the wattle and daub building attached to the hotel. Marshall caught them and shot them, and in retaliation, a number of Aborigines burnt the store down, so that it had to be rebuilt.[892]

A report in the *Ararat Advertiser* entitled 'An affray with the Aborigines at Cathcart' (10 August 1858) demonstrates that inter-cultural relations in the hub of goldfields towns were often volatile. The newspaper's account of the event is somewhat obfuscated by time and lack of context, but it implies some revengeful attack being enacted on the Ballarat Medical Hall by Djabwurrung people, for reasons not enunciated, and a subsequent quarrel with a Police Inspector. The reporter contends that 'but for the timely arrival of [Police Inspector] Mr. Smith that some serious damage would have been done',[893] and thus probably averted the murderous result that occurred at Bairnsdale. The occurrence of abuse and assault by non-Indigenous

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[891] A few representative examples would include reports in the *Argus* describing the 'cruel death [of Eliza] on the goldfields of Ballarat. Kilmore Examiner, "Kilmore: The Aborigines."; 'an aboriginal named Barney' in "Alleged Murder," *Argus* 22 October 1863.; an unidentified Aboriginal at Mountain Creek in Maryborough Advertiser, "Manslaughter," *Argus* 15 April 1861. The rumoured castration of Nukong, an Aboriginal man by a non-Indigenous miner was, according to Fairweather, said to have occurred, due to Charlie Nugong developing an eye for white women. Cited in Fairweather, Brajerack: Mining at Omeo and Glen Wills. p.10. John Amey kicked the outstretched hand of a Kurnai man wanting payment for work done. His family was subsequently threatened. Cited in Collett, Wednesdays Closest to the Full Moon. p.55. PC Buckley wrote in his journal of hurting his foot by kicking 'his black'. Buckley, Journal. PC Chauncy reported on a number of extremely violent assaults by non-Indigenous miners upon Aboriginal people at Whroo and Rushworth diggings. Cited in Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.19

[892] J Adams, Path among the Years- History of Shire of Bairnsdale (Bairnsdale: Bairnsdale Shire Council, 1987). p.25

[893] "Affray with the Aborigines at Cathcart," *Ararat Advertiser* 10 August 1858.

people upon Aboriginal people was not uncommon. Abraham Abrahamsohn, a miner at Ballarat in 1853, recalled that he had caught an Aboriginal man stealing a knife and 'thoroughly beaten up' the 'big rascal'. Abrahamsohn narrowly avoided a violent revenge attack due only to the timely advice of another unidentified Aboriginal (Wathawurrung) person he had befriended.[894] An Aboriginal by the name 'Timbo' successfully brought charges for abuse and assault against a Hugh McKenzie in 1864[895], but was 'brutally kicked' to death two years later.[896] Similarly, an Aboriginal person by the name of Buckley was violently murdered by two miners at Mia Mia Flat in 1862. Numerous newspapers reports[897] revealed that Buckley was a 'familiar figure' to the diggers, Nixon and Simm, who had slept with two Aboriginal women. *The Mount Alexander Mail* provided a précised account of the murder, claiming that:

> An aborigine named Sampson found Buckley in a waterhole – inquest conducted "The general impression as to how the murder was committed appears to be that on Saturday night Buckley proceeded to Simm's tent to persuade the lubras to return to their encampment; that his importunities to this effect excited the wrath of Simms, who struck him several times with a piece of wood taken from his stretcher, and then pushed him outside to the waterhole. Such at all events is the substance of a statement made by an aboriginal boy who alleges that he slept the night in Simm's tent, and saw all that occurred. Of the two lubras we have not yet heard anything, nor do we know whether they will be called upon to give evidence."[898]

Further evidence of the callousness of the crime was brought to light later which corroborated the evidence of Martin (the Aboriginal youth). Simms was overheard to say that: 'he did not see why the blackfellow [Buckley] should not be got out of the way as well as anyone else.'[899] Due largely to the inadmissible evidence of Martin,

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[894] Kellerman, "Interesting Account of the Travels of Abraham Abrahamsohn." p.498
[895] "Court Case."
[896] "Murder," *Argus* 31 December 1866.
[897] *Talbot Leader*, "Mysterious Murder at the Mia Mia."
[898] *Talbot Leader*, "Mysterious Murder at Mia Mia," Mt Alexander Mail 4 July 1862.
[899] *Talbot Leader*, "The Murder of a Black at Mia Mia," *Argus* 8 July 1862.

the Aboriginal youth, the charge was commuted to manslaughter and the defendant received a two year prison sentence.[900]

Occasional newspaper reports of thefts or assaults by Aboriginal people upon non-Indigenous people were at times reported with a comical tinge, explicitly implying Aboriginal peoples' harmless 'child' like propensities. A report in *The Argus* exemplifies this genre of reporting about Aboriginal people:

> On Monday night three of these children of Ham "stuck up" a resident in Sale in the street, and would not part hold of his garments until he had given them "white money"...shortly after a police constable appeared and took the aborigine in charge. The constable, however, not being thoroughly up to the subtlety of the predatory tribes, took hold of the offender by the blanket, and proposed to give him a night in the lock up. His sable prisoner, however, thought different, and quietly withdrawing the pin which held his blanket, left the garment in the hands of the guardian of the peace, whilst he slipped quietly away.[901]

Encounters of an organized or grouped styled malevolent nature were not widely reported in the gold period,[902] though reports such as one that appeared in *The Argus* (20 September 1855)[903] amply demonstrate some Aboriginal people's determination to independently enact their laws and if need be use their weapons upon any non-Indigenous people who would seek to divert them from the performance of their lawful duties.

> Extract from letter of Surveyor in charge of Gippsland District:-
> "Since my last report I have seen other individuals from the Omeo goldfields who corroborate the statements made therein.

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[900] "Charge of Murder," *Argus* 19 October 1863.

[901] The Times, "Crimes of the Blackfellows," *Argus* 9 June 1863. William Rayment considered that the 'nature of these Aborigines is most vindictive but so long as you show them a bold and unfearing front they are awed, but once turn your back on them or shew the least indication of fear and they will soon plant a knife or spear in your body.' Rayment, Diary. p.45

[902] There is an isolated and as yet unsubstantiated report by M Green (1966) of a clash between the 'Bolac tribe and whites which took place in 1859 at the Lake Bolac station'. Cited in Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria. p.116

[903] Subsequent reports from the Gippsland field confirmed this report of fear for both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people's lives and belongings. See: "Letter to the Editor," *Argus* 5 April 1855.; Gippsland Guardian, "Conflict among Aborigines-Two Deaths," *Argus* 13 May 1861.; Gippsland Guardian, "The Gippsland Aborigines."

> "A large party of blacks, numbering between one and two hundred, have come down from the upper part of this and the neighbouring districts to retaliate the onslaught made on the Swan reach Tribe some time back...and came in a strong body to the neighbourhood of Sale. They named five aboriginals whom they expressed their determination to murder, and intimated to the authorities that if interfered with by the police they would fire on them...I myself unexpectedly came upon their camp one night, and had a "yabber" with them. I have seldom seen a finer body of blacks. They robbed one shepherd's hut, but aver their intention not to molest the 'whites,' unless interfered with."[904]

Frequent reports of domestic violence amongst Aboriginal people on the goldfields[905] were an extremely complex issue for Colonial authorities before and during the gold period, which caused a great deal of legal confusion in the Colonial Courts. Especially disturbing and perplexing was the occurrence of intra-clan murders which according to William Thomas, Guardian of Aborigines in Victoria, 'are a new feature'.[906] A considerable number of inter se murders occurred in and around the goldfields which received a considerable amount of attention from newspapers.[907] As a vivid example, at the Castlemaine Circuit Court, Jimmy, an Aboriginal was charged with the murder of his wife Betty. Jimmy was found guilty of manslaughter and imprisoned for one year, but not before some considerable legal wrangling about whether the prisoner was 'liable to the jurisdiction of the court' as there was an absence of evidence that either of 'these natives had become civilized, or had changed their habits or modes of

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[904] Jimmy [Jemmy] was found guilty of murdering his wife Betty "The Aborigines," *Argus* 20 September 1855.Also see report of 'murder among the aboriginals of the Ovens district' in *Argus* 12 April 1860., report in *Ballarat Star* concerning a 'blackfellow' named Watty arrested for murdering his lubra Lizzie at Moyston, in .. Release of Johnny Sutton (Aboriginal) 'charged with the murder of an aboriginal' in .Two internecine murders near Balranald reported in ., at Casterton in *Argus* 11 June 1861, *Argus* 21 October 1865. at Gippsland in "Letter to the Editor." Gippsland Guardian, "Conflict among Aborigines-Two Deaths." at Maryborough in . at Bendigo in *Bendigo Advertiser*, "Murder of a Lubra," *Argus* 2 October 1867.

[905] Miner, Ned Peters at Newbridge in 1857 witnessed a 'blackfellow who, considering himself lord of all, was plying his waddie pretty freely on the delicate form of his spouse.' Blake, ed., A Gold Digger's Diaries by Ned Peters. p.160

[906] 28 August 1852 in Thomas, Journal.

[907] A jury hearing a charge of murder against Campbell, an Aboriginal, of his wife Ann Campbell, heard reference to 'the habit which prevails among them of beating their wives...it was still an undecided question whether the Supreme Court had jurisdiction in crimes committed by the aborigines inter se... and where jurisdiction was not proved; no conviction could be brought in'. The jury returned a verdict of acquittal. *Ballarat Times*, "Charge of Murder against an Aboriginal," *Argus* 20 July 1860. p.7

life so as to be supposed voluntarily to have subjected themselves to the British laws.'[908] A number of International precedents were debated in reference to the case including Native American, Norman and Irish cases where the 'defendant race may retain their immunity from the jurisdiction of the courts of the dominant race'. At the very last the Chief Justice ruled that the jurisdiction of the court is supreme and in reference to a previous case where a similar plea was heard by an Aboriginal defendant decried: 'it makes no difference whether the victim were an English-woman or a native...it is not intended to decide that in no case might there be a concession to a subject race of immunity from the laws of the conquerors living among them.'[909]

Peter, or Mungett, a Wathawurrung man arraigned on a charge of committing a rape on a six year old girl, (report does not stipulate whether victim was Aboriginal or non-Indigenous) also tested the jurisdiction of the Queen's Courts to try Aboriginal people. Mungett claimed both his innocence and that he ought not to have to answer to the Queen's Court as 'he saith that he is a native aboriginal of Ballang, dwelling in Ballan and born out of the allegiance of our Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, and that the said tribe is a sovereign and independent tribe, not in subjection to our said Lady the Queen; and that the said Mungett did never become subject to; or submit himself to or acknowledge allegiance to the said Queen.' Mungett also claimed that a Court within his own tribe was the only Court he was willing to submit to.[910]

Stories were afloat of 'murderous attacks made on early squatters' amongst non-Indigenous gold seekers but generally the consensus from official commentators and others on the central goldfields was as one commentator summed it up: 'Maldon's blacks were only beer-thirsty' and 'The worst that can be charged against the blacks

[908] "The Queen V. Jemmy (One of the Aborigines)," *Argus* 7 September 1860.
[909] "The Queen V. Jemmy (One of the Aborigines)."
[910] "Rape," *Argus* 16 February 1860.

was a predilection for stripping men's shirts and pants off the clotheslines.'[911] There were however, on many goldfields, accounts a subliminal fear of encountering wild or '*myall*' Aboriginal people in the bush and being held up.[912] In Adelaide the sudden departure of almost all men for the Victorian goldfields resulted in reports of 'women being in fear of attacks from the aborigines'.[913] Mrs. Campbell, a Canadian woman on her way to Benalla, provided us with a typical fear of being alone in the bush as 'the danger to us, of meeting blacks, or bushrangers' was paramount.[914]. Campbell considered Aboriginal people to be so reprehensible as to write quite erroneously that 'any white person found living with them, is severely punished by law.'[915] The Reverend Arthur Polehampton 'did not have great faith in what I had heard of the cannibalistic propensities of some of their tribes' but still reeled from the visitations of Wathawurrung people on the Ballarat diggings, thinking he was to be robbed by them.

> They looked like so many hideous demons in the gloom of the forest as the flickering light of the fire fell upon them. I felt all alone as I was too poor to be robbed of any extent and besides any cannibal could have seen at a glance that my bones would afford but little satisfaction at a picking. They surrounded me as I came up and thrust their hideous faces close to mine, half deafening me with their gibberish as I went into my tent and some of them followed me in.

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[911] Williams, A Concise History of Maldon and the Tarrangower Diggings. p.69. In 1856 James Doak is reputed in 1856 to have locked 'the house when he went to the milking yard to prevent natives [Djadjawurrung] from stealing sugar and other household stores.' Cited in Randell, Kimbolton. p.17 JF Foster considered that in 1851 Victoria 'all danger from the aborigines has passed away...No apprehension need now exist of outrages by aborigines'. Foster, The New Colony of Victoria Formerly Port Phillip...And Introducing All the Latest Information to December 1851. p.21

[912] Typical of this memory is seen in family memoirs stemming from the gold period which speak of terror inspired by the thought of their presence. For example, according to the oral history of Strathtulloh Homestead in Melton, built about 1869 the cellar was 'reputedly used by the women residents as a refuge when Aboriginal raiding parties appeared', yet by 1869 the only 'raiding' would have been to ask for tea and sugar. Cited in J Starr, Melton: Plains of Promise (Melton: Melton Shire, 1985). p.122. Samuel Mossman warned travelers to Victoria to 'trust them no further than you can see them, for they are full of treachery', yet provides no anecdotal evidence for this assertion. Mossman, The Gold Regions of Australia. p.74. Samuel Butler also contended that 'the insolence of the blacks in the interior is becoming formidable'. S Butler, The Gold Regions of Australia. Who Ought to Go to the Diggings and Who Ought to Remain at Home (Glasgow: McPhun, 1858). p.36

[913] S Sidney, The Three Colonies of Australia: Nsw, Victoria and South Australia (London: Ingram and Cooke, 1852). p.405

[914] Campbell, Rough and Smooth or Ho! For an Australian Goldfield. p.73

[915] Campbell, Rough and Smooth or Ho! For an Australian Goldfield. p.108

> This was a little too much so I drove them out without ceremony just to let them see I was not going to be humbugged. They made me understand that they wanted rum and bread, and I offered them some damper, on condition that they would go at once. They seemed grateful, and soon left me in peace; applying some term to me which I afterwards was told means "gentleman."[916]

Many non-Indigenous family history sources also identify Aboriginal people on or around the goldfields in a tension filled ambience.[917] Mistrust and fear of Aboriginal people peppers many family narratives often found in local history publications. A resident of Lilydale related how:

> The Hills transported their own wheat and other produce to the crowded diggings around Ballarat and Bendigo. The men and the bullock wagons would be away for three months at a time, leaving their wives and children to care for cows, pigs, poultry and children. Family legend has it that that they hung men's clothes on the line on washing day to persuade the wandering aborigines that men were about.[918]

In reminiscences of the goldfields there appear many accounts of great trepidation about Aboriginal people on the goldfields or on their way to ceremonial grounds[919] such as in the diary of Thomas Booth: 'The Aboriginals were quite numerous around Buninyong [central Victoria]...When the tribe was seen approaching we retired to the inside of the house and remained there until they went past'.[920] Oral history from the Coxall family, also of Buninyong, mirrors the Booth's: "Uncle Tom used to tell us a

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[916] Polehampton, Kangaroo Land. p.153-4

[917] LJ Tennant recalled how 'the aboriginals were quite numerous on the outskirts of town [Broadford] in those days [circa 1860s]; they stole most of the clothing the MacPhersons had brought out with them.' Tennant continues on this theme by recalling a story 'often told by her grandfather' of how as a ten year old being 'chased by 'the blacks [and] to gain ground he threw off his cap, his sporran and other articles of clothing one by one, the pursuers stopping to see what had dropped before continuing the chase.' Cited in Fletcher, ed., Broadford: A Regional History. pp. 179-180

[918] M Aveling, Lillydale: The Billanook Country, 1837-1972 (Carlton: Gray Hunt and Associates, 1972). p.24

[919] In an unidentified writer's letter from Longwood (1892) in northern Victoria it was remarked upon how 'the tribe of Murrumbidgee blacks seemed harmless enough as they stopped here on their way to Melbourne to present a petition to the Government, but when they put on their war paint and staged a corroboree they looked very fearsome, and we were pleased to see them go.' Cited in I Houston, Just Longwood (Melbourne: Lowden, 1975). p.5

[920] Booth, Diary of Thomas Booth.

story of a tribe of Aborigines that used to come from Burrumbah [Burrumbeet?] for their corroboree, an assembly of sacred festive, or warlike character, every year, he was a boy of 3 years old and all the kids were frightened of them. There were thirty-six of them, with their own King Billy."[921] A history of Maldon's goldfields also relates a similar dread: 'A woman can remember hiding under the bed with her mother and sisters when the wild blacks were passing through in tribes to new hunting grounds or to their corroboree grounds.'[922]

Some miners such as Thomas Woolner furnished us with an example whereby he received a visit from 'two ugly blacks' who came in a most stealthy manner 'as if they meditated evil.' Woolner cryptically noted that his tent companion 'proposed a curious bargain to one of them which was accepted as regards words.'[923] A tactic believed to have been employed by Aboriginal people to harass and intimidate the non-Indigenous colonizers during the pastoral period[924] was also noted during the gold period by Celeste de Chabrillan who wrote: 'The woods are on fire every night. The blacks set them alight in retaliation for being driven away.'[925] Others such as Edward Tame were anxious about their overwhelming presence on occasions, but inherently did not appear too intimidated, as their reputation on the central Victorian goldfields was not a violent one

> One dusky fellow comes up to me and says "you give me bacca", then a lubra (woman) "You give me brandy", another "You give me sixpence". I reply "Me no brandy, no bacca". We were in sight of the diggings and though it was uncomfortable to have them swarming around us and to know they were none too particular about carrying off anything, we also knew we feared no physical harm, so off they went and we saw them no more. On another occasion I had

[921] Coxall, ed., Coxall Family History. p.108
[922] Laidler, Maldon. pp. 2-3
[923] Woolner, Diary.
[924] The Kirkland's and their neighbours believed the bush had been deliberately fired by the Wathawurrung to intimidate them. See: Kirkland, Life in the Bush by a Lady.
[925] Chabrillan, The French Consul's Wife: Memoirs of Celeste De Chabrillan in Goldrush Australia. p.125

> rather a scare, for as I was coming home alone, sitting in the dray, I had to pass a lot of them, squatting and standing about, when one of the men pointed his gun directly at me. I did not feel very happy about it, but managed to smile at him, thinking this the best thing to do and knowing I could do precious little if he chose to fire. He smiled back again as though he could do it if he chose, but I would have much preferred that he kept his gun down.[926]

Likewise Lagergren recorded an initial trepidation of his vulnerability but was innately assured that miners need not fear hostility from Victorian Aboriginal people and suggested some naïve rationales for the dissipation of violence:

> From my own impression when in the forest all of a sudden you are face to face with a black person/figure quite like a mummy standing on a water boat made from a hollow tree standing very still with his spear in his hand ready to have a go. His eyes following the fish but also being aware of my arrival. I am feeling clumsy having not realized he was there. The sons of the forests. He could send his spear [through] my heart if he was that way inclined. Although none of them seem very interested in murder. These wilds are just wandering the bordered of Victoria's goldfields similar to the North Americans Indians. They don't seem to be aggressive or bear any signs of anger against the white stream of people populating areas of theirs. Sometimes you hear the more aggressive tribes but problems seem to be solved by trading food, spirits or clothing.[927]

Cases of sexual assault by Aboriginal people upon non-Indigenous people are very isolated, such as the conviction and imprisonment of 'Billy' for rape and assault in September 1852 at Mt Alexander. Some doubt was cast over the conviction by the Judge presiding over the verdict 'as there was a wide belief that the man was actually innocent.'[928] The fear of attack by Aboriginal people on non-Aboriginal gold miners was particularly felt in the Gippsland district. A letter written in April 1854 by Lands Commissioner Charles Tyers, whilst designed to have an alarmist note, emphasised the extreme unease about the bad characters which abounded in the region:

> Within the last few months I have received several reports of murders committed, cattle and sheep stolen and lives threatened by a tribe of Aborigines in Gippsland, many men among them being armed with muskets and fowling

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[926] Tame, Reminiscences of Melbourne and Gold Diggings.
[927] Lagergren, Journal and Letters.
[928] Cited in D Horsfall, Kangaroo Flat (Kangaroo Flat: Hop Back to Kangaroo Flat Committee, 1993). p.25

> pieces. I would, therefore, beg leave to suggest that at least six hundred mounted troopers under an Officer's command be stationed at the Green Hills as heretofore, who by their occasional presence at the various stations where the Blacks congregate would act as a preventative force.[929]

Off the goldfields, reports of violence by Aboriginal people upon non-Indigenous people were relatively singular compared to the initial phase of dispossession.[930] A report titled 'Depredations By Blacks' which appeared in *The Argus* (6 August 1855) is interesting as it provides a rare example of Victorian Aboriginal voices expressing their assuredness, bravado, superiority in the bush and resistance to non-Indigenous occupation of their lands:

> Our neighbourhood has again been visited by a party of black thieves...a party of blacks called at his [Cochrane's] station and, as usual, demanded food. Mrs. Cochrane being alone and frightened by their insolent conduct complied with their demands. They were not satisfied with what was given them, but went to the sheepfold and drove away about 400 of them into the scrub, where they were jovially feasting when Mr. Cochrane returned, who in spite of their threats recovered about 300 sheep. Information was given to the police...but after exerting themselves to the utmost for several days, their efforts were of no avail. It is next to impossible to get at the blacks when they have taken shelter in the scrub...Two of the [Aboriginal] fellows concerned in this affair boasted to Mrs. Cochrane, saying "No good handcuffs, me break 'em along stone; me got 'em now, no more me give 'em along a _____ police."[931]

Alcohol abuse was commonly reported to be the reason for a lot of inter-racial troubles throughout the pastoral period, and in the goldrush period it was observed that with the further breakdown of traditional law the level of abuse increased.

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[929] Court, Gold, Law and the Moi. p.5

[930] Tommy, a Djabwurrung man was sentenced to 30 days for sheep stealing. "Charges of Sheep Stealing," *Ararat Advertiser* 1 October 1858. Andy Pittern, a South Australian Aboriginal man appeared frequently before the Melbourne courts for robbery, offensive behaviour and drunkenness. See: "Robbery from the Person," *Argus* 1 July 1861.

[931] "W.B", "Depredation by Blacks," *Argus* 1855.

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

During the gold rush period it was almost universally proclaimed by Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people alike that excessive alcohol drinking was one of the chief reasons for Victorian Aboriginal demographic decline, social disturbance and cultural disruption.[932] Aboriginal informants in court cases and other historical sources testified to the immense internal conflict that occurred within their communities which they attributed squarely at the feet of alcohol abuse. Johnny McLean, an Aboriginal from the 'Hopkins Tribe' deposed at a manslaughter court case in October 1860 that 'On the day of Buckley's death the Mount Shadwell tribe were all drunk. Buckley gave "cheek" to our chief. Our chief told us to keep Barney quiet.'[933] In 1858 the Victorian Government Select Committee inquired into the 'present condition of the Aborigines in Victoria and of the best means of helping them'. All respondents to a circular sent out in that year noted their heavy mortality levels particularly in areas where goldfields were in close proximity.[934] Visitors and travelers to the goldfields such as James Bonwick, were unequivocal that alcohol abuse was exclusively the

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[932] One commentator on Evansford's history observed 'the natives who at first were fairly numerous...acquired a taste for the white man's liquor ...and ere long their numbers began to rapidly decrease.' Unknown, Evansford History. n.p.; F McKenzie Clark equally noted at Bendigo that 'some unscrupulous enough to sell them [Djadjawurrung] rum and when they obtained this in quantities some fearful scenes were enacted in their camps.' Cusack, ed., Early Days on Bendigo. p.39. William Howitt observed 'They fish and hunt, make baskets and possum rugs, and sell their produce to the white men, and drink it...The fire water is killing them off'. Cited in: Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold. p.143 Henry Gray at Indented Head wrote of their fondness for a 'nobbler'. Gray, Letters. Miner E Von Guerard, saw 'a miserable group of eight aborigines, clad in the most ludicrous odds and ends of European wearing apparel, and nearly all in a drunken condition. It is sad to see how the poor creatures are demoralized by the white man's influence.' Cited in: Rich, ed., Eugene Von Guerard in Ballarat: Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by Eugene Von Guerard. p.27. Miner Seweryn Korzelinski, duly commented that: 'Natives in contact with the mines drink like regular John Bulls or Tipperary boys.' Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. p.9

[933] Reporter, "Manslaughter."

[934] William Huon's response from the Wodonga district is typical of many of the respondents, noting that: 'the tribes for the last few years have been in the habit of frequenting the various diggings and townships; and intemperance has carried off any members of the tribe that were sickly or suffering from any disease.' Cited in: Victorian Government, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines,; Together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices.

reason for their demise, exclaiming: 'It is not the want of food, nor is it mere disease, that occasions the evil; the sorrow, the demon, the destroyer is *Strong Drink*, under whose maddening influence murders are committed, and fatal conflicts induced.'[935] The concern expressed about excessive drinking on (and off) the goldfields was not however solely aimed at Aboriginal people. Lamentations about the pervasiveness of alcohol abuse in colonial Victoria were endemic throughout the historical records. The *Argus* rallied about the 'abject submission to ardent spirits' and portrayed society as one which appeared to be 'perversely bent' on intemperance. The death of a prominent physician on the goldfields from drink (*delirium tremens*) moved the *Argus* to question the community's attitudes on one of the most insidious of 'our colonial vices'. The writer charged that 'Society is so familiar with it, that drunkenness has all but lost the power to shock; and cases of *delirium tremens* are of such frequent occurrence that few men regard them as appalling events – a reproach to civilization, and a brand upon our measure as a people.'[936] Other writers, too, weighed in with their commentary on what they had witnessed, such as Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye who observed 'Many of the diggers have reduced themselves to mere savages from the effects of drink'.[937] JJ Bond, a miner at Benalla, was dumbfounded by the permissiveness of alcohol in Australia.

> None without experience of Australia can imagine the extent to which drinking goes on here, sufferers from delirium tremens are to be seen everyday. This township is said to equal or excel any in Australia in drunkenness and Australia is well known to be the most drunken country in the world...First thing in the morning, last at night and all day long is to drink spirits and smoke. Several deaths from drinking have occurred since my staying at Benalla indeed it seems to be the usual cause of death. It is difficult to avoid drinking it is so commonly forced on one.[938]

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[935] Sayers, ed., Western Victoria- the Narrative of an Educational Tour in 1857. p.181
[936] Editor, "The Aborigines," *Argus* 17 March 1856. p.4
[937] Ramsay-Laye, Social Life and Manners in Australia. p.37
[938] Bond, Memoirs.

A somewhat typical portrayal of alcohol abuse shared by Aboriginal and non-Indigenous alike was described at one bush shanty thus: 'I found John Cookey drunk and bleeding from fighting, John Weir bleeding from fighting, John Wearing cut and bleeding from fighting John Weir, Teddy our blackfellow drunk...John Cookey was so overpowered by liquor that I had to give him large quantities of ammonia to get him sufficiently recovered.'[939] The personal tragedies that touched people at a family level were reported upon. Samuel Lazarus met a man whose 20 year old brother had died from the effects of drunkenness at Bendigo: 'It is painful to contemplate the horrible havoc which drunkenness makes on the diggings.'[940] Visitor to the goldfields, James Bonwick, provided a representative sample of the alcohol-charged binges that occurred amongst Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people alike at events such as 'Race week' at Casterton in western Victoria. Whilst Bonwick and others were painfully aware that alcohol abuse was a terrible scourge upon non-Indigenous people[941], they expressed at turns their sense of disgust, disempowerment, impotence, indifference, grief, resignation and guilt at Aboriginal people's alcohol abuse as they witnessed the portend of near extinction for Aboriginal people, already reeling from momentous changes to their land and social fabric.

> The tribe is now nearly extinct. The miserable remnant I saw suffering with the Whites, from the effects of wild intemperance; it being then Race week, an awful time of reckless extravagance and unbridled debauching. The shrieks of drunken women, the cries of reeling natives, and the quarrels of besotted men greeted me upon my first visit to Casterton. By all accounts, the scenes of the three previous days would equal any of the wildest of bacchanalian freaks and

[939] Cited in: Longmire, Nine Creeks to Albacutya - a History of the Shire of Dimboola. p.28
[940] S Lazarus, Diary, SLV Ms, Melbourne.
[941] JD Mereweather commented on the hazardous ingredients in alcohol served at bush inns such as tobacco, strychnia and other 'odious fabrications'. Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. p.154

> follies...Yet the law pretends to protect the native against him who holds the bottle to him; but who is to enforce the law, or who does enforce it?[942]

There was certainly no doubt in the nineteenth century that the consumption of alcohol greatly contributed to Aboriginal deaths by reducing their resistance to disease,[943] increasing the number of violent inter-personal encounters,[944] reducing a sense of personal responsibility for behaviour,[945] increasing the incidence of prostitution[946] and increasing the tendency to sleep while intoxicated and unprotected from the weather. It led to Aboriginal people seeking out sources of alcohol in camp

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[942] Sayers, ed., Western Victoria- the Narrative of an Educational Tour in 1857. p.128

[943] At an inquest into the death of an Aboriginal named 'Ratty' at Echuca it was found that the cause of death was 'intemperance'. Though there were suspicions raised about the prisoner's violent handling by a Mr Lawrence. Riverine Herald, *Argus* 30 August 1866.

[944] Campbell, an Aboriginal man was charged with murdering his wife, Mary Ann Campbell, whilst being 'very little drunk'.*Ballarat Times*, "Charge of Murder against an Aboriginal." p.7. William Thomas deposed in court that he had been 'within a few months, at four different criminal sessions through the colony; six blacks in all, were put on trial for murder, and in each case through scenes of drunkenness.' "The Aborigines," *Argus* 3 September 1860. p.5. See also Bain Attwood's discussion and references in Attwood, My Country - a History of the Djadja Wurrung;1837-1864. Chapter 3. The murder of an Aboriginal woman at Charlton was reported to have occurred when 'a number of natives were drinking grog at their camp'

[945] An Aboriginal person known as 'Black Billy' was charged for stealing a horse, whilst being intoxicated and had been 'labouring under the delusion' the horse belonged to somebody else. "Taking and Using," *Argus* 11 February 1860. A report of a violent assault by an Aboriginal at the Eagelhawk diggings on a young non-Indigenous boy was the result of the 'criminal folly of innkeepers and shantykeepers in supplying the native blacks... as they were strongly under the influence of liquor'. T Independent, "An Aboriginal Outrage," *Argus* 27 June 1863. p.6. A witness at Ballarat Circuit Court inquiring into the murder of an Aboriginal woman on the diggings deposed that "The blacks are in the habit of beating their lubras when drunk." *Ballarat Times*, "Charge of Murder against an Aboriginal." p.7

[946] Robert Whittle, a miner at various gold diggings in the central highlands of Victoria in 1857 wrote: 'Like all Aboriginals in contact with Europeans; these natives have acquired a great craving for liquors; any of them almost will sell his lubra for a dram, and even King Billy himself, for half a crown, once threw his lubra into a "sludge hole" near my store, to get money to buy whisky – when it was as much as a dozen of them could do to get her out again alive.' Whittle, Reminiscences. p.78. In 1872, John Green reported on the condition of Aboriginal people receiving Victorian government supplies on the Murray River noted the prostitution of young Aboriginal girls for alcohol. 'It is a fact that many of the girls are contaminated before they are ten years of age, and that by white men – their parents give them for money or drink – the consequence is that very few of them live to womanhood.'.J Green (1873) in:Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.9. In May 1881, Tommy Banfield, an Aboriginal from the Wangaratta district, reported that his brother had sold one girl to a publican for five bottles of grog, Cited in: Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament..

environments where non-Indigenous people were more likely to harass and intimidate them.[947]

Excessive alcohol consumption was also observed to impact on mobility, motivation to carry out traditional food gathering practices and ceremonies,[948] and liability to mining camp accidents such as falling down shafts.[949]

Objections to and schemes for the abeyance of excessive alcohol consumption[950] were frequently sported in colonial newspapers of the period and by the respondents to the Victorian government's circular questionnaire on Aborigines in 1858.[951] One correspondent in *The Argus* called for compensation in place of 'maddening poison in

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[947] A group of intoxicated Aboriginal people were reported to be intimidated on the Bendigo diggings by an Irishman who was from a 'more savage tribe than their own'. *Bendigo Advertiser*. John Bulmer noted an incident where Aboriginal people were plied with grog for the amusement of diggers who watched the mayhem that ensued. Cited in Attwood, My Country - a History of the Djadja Wurrung;1837-1864. p.39

[948] Several reports in newspapers drew attention to how alcohol changed 'friendly dances into a discourteous distribution of blows and a free use of waddies' as occurred near Ararat or reduced the corroboree to a 'debauch' as occurred at Ballarat. *Ararat Advertiser*. p.5; "Corroboree." p.5. William Rayment noted at Wangaratta how 'Tom, King of Wangaratta' and his daughter had for a time foregone traditional food gathering and 'without much ceremony, asked me for white money to buy grog. Politely throwing her a shilling I took my leave, but before we started from the place I had the novelty of seeing both his Majesty and his daughter in a most beastly state of intoxication' Rayment, Diary. p.45

[949] A Djadjawurrung man, known as "Lanky", met his death falling down a digger's hole at the Yandoit Creek diggings in April 1855. Parker believed he had been "induced to take some liquor to which he was not usually accustomed." Cited in Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria. p.146

[950] In an article submitted to the *Argus* to 'urge the claims of the native blacks upon the public', the authors proposed 'Let the whole of the blacks near the towns and in the populated districts be removed to one of the islands in the straits.' "A Plea on Behalf of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Victoria," *Argus* April 2 1856. p.6

[951] Individuals such as Andy Pittern, an Adelaide Aboriginal appeared before the Melbourne courts on charges relating to alcohol abuse on a frequent basis. See: "Drunkenness and Disorderly Conduct.", "Disorderly Conduct," *Argus* 16 March 1863. Frank Lane, also known as King Billy, a Wathawurrung was charged with being drunk and disorderly. See: "Drunk and Disorderly," *Ballarat Times* 12 April 1858. A correspondent from Anderson's Creek diggings noted the exceeding riotous and offensive conduct of Aboriginal people due to the great evil perpetrated by those who supply the drink, and added that 'if strong measures are not adopted by the authorities...very serious calamities are likely to occur.' A report from the *Dunolly Express* in September 1862 said, The Aboriginals have for the last few days been arriving in considerable numbers...and it was evident from their frantic orgies that some of them – lubras included – had been indulging in an excess of "fire water", which somehow or other in spite of the existing laws against supplying them with liquor, they have managed to get from unscrupulous vendors.' Cited in Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings. p.6. A correspondent noted the ease by which Aboriginal people procured alcohol and called for more enforcement of the law in this matter. Riverine Herald, *Argus* 20 January 1865.

the shape of fiery drink' and posited that 'the law, if it will not prevent the white man from brutalizing himself [with alcohol], should prevent him from enabling the ignorant native to become equally brutal.'[952] Miners and correspondents in colonial newspapers such as the *Argus* repeatedly pointed to the 'great annoyance' caused by Aboriginal people who had been plied with alcohol. The cause of their ire was often their (unarticulated) 'objectionable habits; their continual drunkenness and the noises they keep up at their camp at the wharf [Echuca] all day and all night'.[953] A representative example of this reportage is to be found in the *Ballarat Star* (9April, 1861) which reported on a:

> beastly and degrading exhibition [that] took place in Sturt Street, a few yards above the Rainbow Hotel. On the footpath lay a drunken lubra, and by her side were two dogs. Near her sat a second lubra with two children...As may be imagined, a considerable crowd of spectators collected, and these the semi-intoxicated lubra besought to give her money. The aborigine made an occasional blow with a long stick at some of the spectators, and exclaimed "What you want to see? She's only a little drop of brandy." The police ultimately got a hand cart, and conveyed the drunken lubra to the lock up. Persons who give these people drink should remember that the penalty for so doing is 50 pounds.[954]

Ned Peters wrote in his diary in May 1855 of his displeasure with the Djadjawurrung at Tarnagulla who had been 'noisy all last night from drink given to them by the diggers' and a year later offers 'The Blackfellows have visited this quarter again. They had a carrobbine [corroboree] the other night and ever since throughout the whole of the nights are making awful noises, disturbing the peace and quietude of

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[952] Two years later, in 1864, 'Spectator' wrote that he had observed intoxicated Aboriginal people in Melbourne being intimidated by non-Indigenous people and called for a type of refuge house to be established for their benefit. Spectator, "Aboriginal Protection," *Argus* 2 June 1864.

[953] *Argus* 22 February 1867. A report (14 June 1865) of sly grog selling at Rochester claimed 'that night after night there is nothing but uproar and disturbances, rows kicked up between whites and blacks.' Cited in: Rochester Centenary Celebrations Committee, Live and Prosper (Rochester: Author, c.1955). n.p. A similar report was filed in 1864. Riverine Herald.The *Gold Diggers Monthly Magazine* commented: 'Cases of intemperance abound in their tribes. Their revelries and quarrels disturb the camp at night, and disease, misery, violence and even murder follow.' Cited in Bate, Lucky City. p.30

[954] "News and Notes," *Ballarat Star* 9 April 1861.

Sandy creek [Tarnagulla], from the effects of grog given them by whites.'[955] Letters to the editor of the *Argus,* such as one from 'A friend of the Blacks', spelt out their various opinions for the cause of excessive alcohol consumption among Aboriginal people as 'misplaced liberality' from the government in supplying them with rations gratis, noting that: 'Many cases have already come under our notice of blacks who a year ago, spent their earnings (often ten and fifteen shillings a week) in providing for the wants of their families, who, since the Government have relieved them from that duty, spend every shilling they possess at the public houses. Surely something could and ought to be done to remedy this great evil.'[956] Not all miners however were quick to pronounce judgement about the consumption of alcohol by Aboriginal people. JM Smith wrote matter of factly: 'They have tasted his firewater and like it much, and also approve of his weed. They resist all his attempts to make them abandon their habitual ease and independence except when tempted by rum and tobacco, for which they will readily work.'[957] In 1866, the Central Board of Aborigines reported in its Fifth Report that Honorary Correspondent Thomas Mitchell considered it highly impractical and very injudicious to thwart Aboriginal people from doing what non-Indigenous workers practiced. Mitchell noted that their kinship practices of providing for their entire clan group were still extant, and intimates that alcohol consumption amongst the wider Aboriginal community would be impossible to stop as their access to paid work was widespread combined with the fact that their cultural traditions still prevailed amongst them.

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[955] Blake, ed., A Gold Digger's Diaries by Ned Peters. pp. 58,101. Peters also relates that at Poverty Reef in 1857 he went 'past some natives on our way. A sad, sad sight to see them in a state of drunkenness.' p.160

[956] Friend of the Blacks, "The Blacks," *Argus* 5 May 1863. p.5

[957] Cuffley, ed., Send the Boy to Sea: The Memoirs of a Sailor on the Goldfields by James Montagu Smith. p.72

> The blacks are almost all fond of intoxicating drinks...It is hardly possible to prevent them from obtaining drink, as they have as good a right to spend what they earn as a white man. Their young men get a pound or two occasionally by cutting bark, tailing cattle, and c., this they almost always lay out in drink, and treat all hands at the camp. They are not at all selfish amongst themselves, but they are so as regards the whites.[958]

Similarly, John Kerr, a pastoralist in the Loddon district, did not question why Aboriginal people were attracted towards indulging in alcohol abuse but only considered that 'When the diggings broke out, the propensity of the natives for strong drink was greatly increased by the facility with which they could obtain it', and added that: 'Its effects on their constitution was most pernicious, and greatly contributed to the rapid diminution of their numbers.'[959] Other writers such as William Craig, a miner at Mount Cole, noted how Aboriginal people's excessive consumption of alcohol was used as a vehicle to amuse themselves describing how miners took the 'greatest pleasure to be among them at night, taking stock of their strange exhibitions, and cracking jokes at the expense of the oldest and ugliest hag in the encampment'.[960] Craig describes how 'One of their number had discovered a valuable specimen of gold (7 ounces)' and how it had been exchanged 'with the shanty keeper for a liberal supply of bad liquor.'[961] In a chapter titled 'An Adventure with blacks' he relates for his colonial readership a particularly violent altercation between 'half-drunken' Djabwurrung clans deliberately and cruelly rigged by a non-Indigenous miner and

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[958] T Mitchell cited in Aborigines, Fifth Annual Report on the Condition of Aborigines. pp.15-16
[959] Hancock, ed., Glimpses of Life in Victoria by a Resident. p.146
[960] JM Barr told of how 'Aboriginals visited his party's camp on the McCallums Creek, and how a drunken digger made amorous advances to a gin, with the result that the party broke up in the wildest possible confusion.' Cited in Flett, Dunolly: Story of an Old Gold Diggings. p.7. James Sinclair was appalled at the attitudes of his countrymen who plied two Aboriginal women with 23 pints of beer as a wager to see how much they could drink. Sinclair was also saddened to see a corroboree disrupted and distorted by drunken non-Indigenous bush-men cajoling them with alcohol and was thoroughly incensed by a bushman who knocked a drunken Aboriginal man cruelly to the ground with no cause. Sinclair, Memoirs. pp.24-6 John Bulmer was equally distressed to see 'the dreadful treatment received at the hands of the Europeans' whilst at Burnt creek (Dunolly). Cited in R Vanderwal, ed., John Bulmer's Recollections of Victorian Aboriginal Life (Melbourne: Museum Victoria, 2000). p.xvi.
[961] Craig, My Adventures on the Australian Goldfields. pp.278-9

calculated to produce "a purty stand-up fight" between rival clans which the 'majority' of non-Indigenous miners heartily endorsed. Other commentators[962] such as William Thomas, who was appointed Aboriginal Guardian after the abolition of the Aboriginal Protectorate system in 1850, were also well acquainted with how Aboriginal people were liberally encouraged to drink to excess, were cruelly treated whilst intoxicated and suffered disastrous effects upon their physical and social health. It should be stressed that Thomas wrote predominately of his experiences of Aboriginal people that had gathered together about the City of Melbourne - usually for a festive occasion like the races, ceremonial purposes or to carry out traditional legal procedures. Thomas was not describing Aboriginal people in their everyday pursuits when he penned:

> There have been, during the past half-year, upwards of three hundred aboriginal natives at one time in these counties, from the north, north-west, and east tribes; and all except those from the east, generally speaking, appear to have become habitual drunkards, male and female, - I allude to the young,- and in consequence are with great difficulty kept from the town. When there they no longer ply with their tomahawks to cut wood for the inhabitants, but prowl about the public houses and vile avenues, where they are encouraged by the improvident gold-diggers in drinking, even to rewarding them for so doing. On various occasions they have been found so drunk as to be found lying in the highways during the night. Their thirst and propensity for ardent spirits is so great, that I have known them recently to go thirty miles to indulge their appetites. They are now brought to an awful and dangerous state of degradation, so that the speedy extinction of the Melbourne and Barrabool tribes is inevitable. Although the law is stringent upon those who supply blacks with liquor it is now craftily evaded by them.[963]

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[962] John Bulmer, who was at the Bet Bet (Dunolly) diggings in 1854, noted that many diggers found it amusing to get Aboriginal people drunk and watch the fights that ensued. Bulmer papers, cited in Christie, Aboriginals in Colonial Victoria. pp.146-7 Parker told the 1858 *SCVLC* on Aborigines that "there were many persons on the diggings who seem to take a pleasure in compelling even those who are disposed to be sober to take liquor, in spite of their reluctance." Parker in Victorian Government, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines,; Together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices.

[963] W Thomas cited in Just, Australia: Or, Notes Taken During a Residence in the Colonies from the Gold Discovery in 1851 Till 1857. pp.25-6

The gold rush and the concomitant gold towns and diggings shanties were considered to be the harbingers of destruction for Aboriginal people in Victoria,[964] and according to Alfred Joyce, a pastoralist in central Victoria was effectively the final death knell. Joyce wrote:

> The blacks did not show any signs of serious diminution till the breaking out of the diggings, but their demoralization had been going on all the time previously. Debauchery and drink was doing its work. When bush inns became numerous the blacks congregated about them and took all the drink that was offered them, and purchased it whenever they could get a coin or two by begging or otherwise. All this was bad enough when the white inhabitants were few and far between, but at the outbreak of the diggings, with greater temptations and facilities, swept them off rapidly.[965]

Substance abuse by Aboriginal people on and off the goldfields of Victoria was not exclusively limited to alcohol introduced by non-Indigenous miners.[966] Opium addiction, as outlined in an earlier chapter, was also known to have occurred amongst Aboriginal people on a number of goldfields in Victoria. The number, context and frequency of opium smoking by Aboriginal people in the gold period are uncertain, with only brief reports still extant. There are, however, a great number of reports which relate to Aboriginal habits of temperance, which have rarely been accorded much research by scholars.[967] Notable examples of abstinence were recorded by

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[964] A correspondent in the *Argus* debated that the 'great stumbling block in the way of permanent good resulting from the intercourse between the aborigines and Europeans is intoxication and the sale of spirits to the blacks.' *Argus* 17 November 1862.

[965] James, ed., A Homestead History - Being the Reminiscences and Letters of Alfred Joyce of Plaistow and Norwood, Port Phillip 1843 To1864. p.78

[966] Several writers noted the manufacture of alcoholic beverages by Victorian Aboriginal people with Indigenous plants. MJ McKenzie, a worker on a number of pastoral properties across Victoria in the nineteenth century recalled that in north-west Victoria 'where there was neither water nor vegetation other than a creeping desert vine from which the local blacks brewed a kind of beer'. Cited in MacDonald, The Member for Mt Ida. p.2. AB Pierce, also a traveler and pastoral worker noted what may be a reference to the same plant, possibly *Boerhavia* sp.: 'All the aborigines are great drunkards and have from time immemorial a fermented liquor from the nadoo bean.' Leatherbee, ed., Knocking About: Being Some Adventures of Augustus Baker Pierce in Australia. p.166

[967] See CP Cooke in Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.20

goldfield newspapers correspondents such as one from the *Daylesford Mercury* which remarked (6 May, 1865) that a small party of Aborigines of the Daisy–Hill tribe (presumably Djadjawurrung) had discovered a nugget weighing two ounces on Amherst Flat, and being 'Wiser than some of their generation, instead of spending the money realized by the sale of the nugget on drink, they purchased a stock of warm winter clothing, and with this on their backs they paraded the streets with the greatest possible dignity'.[968] A month later a correspondent for the *Talbot Leader* informed his readers of another discovery of a large (30 ounces) gold nugget by Aboriginal people at the Emu gold field which realized about 120 pounds for them. The news report, already referred to in an earlier chapter, goes on to mention how after purchasing warm clothing and blankets the successful party of Djadjawurrung prospectors had hired two vehicles to take them to Clunes, with the purpose of fulfilling their kinship obligations to a non-Indigenous storekeeper there. The newspaper correspondent and other observers keenly noted their abstinence from alcohol, stating:

> One thing was evident, namely, that they were all quite sober; and on enquiring how this was, since aborigines are expected to get drunk the moment they obtain any money, it transpired that several attempts had been made in certain 'shanties' to induce them to drink, and that they had refused point blank to imbibe anything stronger than ginger beer. Indeed one of the party, who appears to be head or chief of the rest, replied to one of the tempters that 'black fellow could be a gentleman as well as whitefellow,' – meaning, we presume, that he was not bound to get drunk because he had suddenly acquired a considerable sum of money. In this respect this sensible aborigine is decidedly in advance of some of the whitefellows, to whom the sudden acquisition of fortune is more often the prelude to intoxicated habits than the forerunner of staid and sober conduct.[969]

James Sinclair encountered two Aboriginal men in his travels across Victoria who 'both expressed what is a rare thing for a blackfellow to do, their thorough disgust of

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[968] Daylesford Mercury, *Argus* 6 May 1865. p.5
[969] *Talbot Leader*. p.5

drunkenness and drinking, which caused, as the eldest black rather expressively stated it, both white fellow and black to become "too much ----- big fool". Barry Collett, in his history of South Gippsland, wrote of initiatives by Bratauolong elders to stem the destructive effects of alcohol abuse amongst his community, which, sadly, non-Indigenous authorities proved unable to administer. Collett wrote: 'In October 1853 Old Darby, a Bratauolong elder, possibly from the Corner Inlet Kut-wut, asked Police Magistrate Tyers to order a Sale publican not to sell more than one glass of grog to Aborigines, for he and other elders were worried about the way in which Bratauolong youths increasingly neglected their traditional responsibilities.'[970] Kulin elders at Coranderrk, an Aboriginal reserve established in 1863, had also created their own effective stratagems to manage excessive alcohol consumption. In April 1865 'they created their own reserve court which set punishments for drinking; a five shilling fine for the first offence, ten for the second and twenty shillings for the third, except for single men who forfeited their right to marry.'[971]

Laws to prohibit the supply of alcohol to Aboriginal people were enacted and enforced with great regularity by the Victorian police across the Colony,[972] and it was claimed that 'numerous magistrates throughout the colony have expressed their intention to refuse to grant a license to any publican against whom this offence may

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[970] Collett, Wednesdays Closest to the Full Moon. pp.55-6

[971] Cited in Broome, Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800. p.168

[972] A large number of court appearances and convictions for non-Indigenous people selling alcohol to Aboriginal people occurred throughout the gold period, on and off the goldfields. In September 1860 and again in February 1864 three men were convicted at Anderson's Creek diggings and fined 5 pounds each for selling spirituous liquor to 6 Aboriginal men, a crime which the presiding magistrate called a 'cruel and illegal act'. "The Aborigines." p.5; "Selling Spiritous Liquors to the Aborigines," *Argus* 1864. p.6. Also see:W Radden, The Early History of Warrandyte 1839-66, RHSV, Melbourne. p.9. In Ballarat, a publican was fined in 1867 for illegally disposing of liquor to aboriginals. In the same year Mrs Clarke was charged at the Ballarat Petty Sessions for disposing of liquor to aboriginals, but the charge was dismissed. Cited in Ballarat Petty Sessions, PROV, Melbourne.. A wine and spirit merchant at Hamilton was fined and his license cancelled in 1863. Gazette, *Argus* 19 August 1863. p.4 At Essendon two licensed victuallers were convicted and fined for supplying 'aborigines with grog'. On the St Andrews goldfields there was a conviction for selling alcohol to Aborigines. Cited in St Andrews Primary School Council, St Andrews: A Village Built on Gold (St Andrews: Author, 1998).

be proved',[973] but it proved impossible to stem the sale of alcohol. One report in the *Argus* expressed the frustration of the police and magistrates in Victoria who were 'exerting themselves to put down the sale of intoxicating liquors to the aborigines, and are dealing with such cases summarily, there is not a similar activity on the New South Wales side.'[974]

INTERFERING

This section shall highlight a number of notable instances where non-Indigenous people on the goldfields of Victoria interfered in Aboriginal cultural affairs, which again demonstrate a greater deal of cultural interaction was occurring than twentieth century historians have been prone to indicate. Perhaps the most potent reason why very little discussion has taken place on the topic of cultural interactions between Aboriginal people and Victorian non-Indigenous mining communities is the derogatory and often erroneous manner in which interactions were reported. In many gold mining towns, non-Indigenous people witnessed Aboriginal people practicing their customs and laws. On most occasions where customary practices were carried out and witnessed by non-Indigenous miners or townsfolk it was reported with an air of incomprehensibility and an often naïve manner, without much understanding of the cultural importance or nuances of customary cultural activity, and thus was touted as another example of their degenerate and irredeemable qualities. Examples of this can be seen in newspaper reports. On 10 August 1858, the *Mount Ararat Advertiser* ran the following story headed "Affray with the Aborigines at Cathcart."

> On the afternoon of August 5, a party of these "sable gentry" were amusing themselves by throwing their spears and boomerangs at each other, when one

[973] *Argus* 5 September 1864. p.6
[974] *Argus* 6 May 1865. p.5

> deliberately threw his boomerang at the Ballarat Medical Hall which finally landed on the surgeon's table amongst his instruments. Upon being remonstrated with, one of them [Djabwurrung] leveled a spear. Inspector Smith intervened breaking the "blackfellows" spear and other "instruments of destruction." The blacks for some time past have been congregated in considerable numbers round this quarter, and mostly in a state of intoxication, when they are exceedingly noisy and troublesome, and it is high time something was done to abate the nuisance![975]

It is possible the activity reported as 'amusing themselves' was an enactment of customary law / punishment being carried out on one of their own or was the activation of a feud between opposing clans / language groups being carried out. The gravity of the incident can be gauged by the leveling of a spear at an interfering white person, not withstanding their ignorance of the seriousness of their interference. The faux pas connected to mortuary ceremonies was particularly disturbing to Aboriginal people's sense of propriety and decency as they witnessed non-Indigenous miners ploughing up the land and desecrating mortuary sites.[976] Cultural misunderstandings and gaffes were occasionally noticed by non-indigenous miners such as JC Hamilton:

> I was at Bendigo, in the year1854, at the diggings, and, arriving late one evening, our party drew up near a log, which we intended to light for our fire, but discovering a newly made grave just behind the log, we lit our fire away from it, and used the logs for a seat. A party of blacks [Djadjawurrung] came and wanted us to shift from the place, as they had buried one of their number there late the evening before, and wanted to complete their arrangements. We told them we would not interfere in any way, so they set to work and put up a

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[975] "Affray with the Aborigines at Cathcart."

[976] Near the Ovens River diggings, William Howitt, a traveler on the goldfields described the propriety of Aboriginal mortuary ceremonies being impinged upon by non-Indigenous people. Howitt wrote: 'A woman of the tribe was just dead and buried. Mr John Reid had desired to know at what hour the funeral would take place; but they do not like white people to witness these ceremonies; and when he went at the hour named, all was over.' Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold. p.185. A Batey in 1856 resolved to 'dig for an aboriginals cobbera (head)' and rifled through an Aboriginal graveyard to achieve his goal. Batey, Reminiscences. pp.93-4. Excavations for the Guildford Mining Company uncovered a stone tomahawk 'buried with some deceased native' which was stated to have belonged to 'this country blackfellow' by an aboriginal woman whose opinion we took upon it.' *Mount Alexander Mail*, *Argus* 31 January 1866. Numerous inquests were held on Aboriginal remains discovered by gold miners across Victoria. See: Crown Law Offices, Inquest Deposition Files, PROV, Melbourne.

> brush fence round the grave at a distance of about twenty yards, leaving an entrance at the furtherest point...[977]

Not all miners were as respectful as Hamilton and his mates. Korzelinski, a miner at Sydney Flat, near Bendigo, whilst digging a shaft came across the grave of a 'native [Djadjawurrung] chief' and considered it would have been 'an excellent find for an archaeologist'. He offered that his only reason for not interfering with the fresh grave site was 'I was too busy sinking my shaft to worry overmuch about scientific problems.'[978]

In the pastoral districts there tended to be more cognizance of Aboriginal customs, but of course understanding did not necessarily ensure smooth relationships, from either side of the frontier. JD Mereweather, a religious Minister in the Murray district relayed how a 'man of colour from the United States' on his way to the Victorian diggings had been mistaken for an 'enemy of their tribe' and assassinated by Aboriginal people. Mereweather recognized that from the Aboriginal legal point of view no crime had been committed and that this 'lamentable blunder' had led to white outrages.

> Now these stupid blacks mistook this poor American black for one of themselves, and thus considered his life lawfully forfeited. They disdained to touch [and did not rob] his property. A black expressed to me to-day great indignation at their stupidity, saying that they ought to have known the difference between "black fellow" and "white man's black fellow."[979]

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[977] Hamilton, Pioneering Days in Western Victoria.
[978] Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. p.91. See historian, Tom Griffiths' discussion on the issue of grave robbing by non-Indigenous people such as RE Johns during the gold era in: Griffiths, Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia.
[979] Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. pp.179-180

In the pastoral period there had been a degree of interfering in Aboriginal lives when non-Aboriginal sensibilities were affronted, especially in relation to the treatment meted out by non-Indigenous and Aboriginal men towards their wives. In the Cowell family's oral history of the Orbost district is an account which illustrates both the intimacy which Aboriginal people had with non-Indigenous people but also the degree at times which they paternalistically interfered in the lives of Aboriginal people, often with good intentions:

> Harry Derrimungie, Queen Sally's husband came to the cottage in great distress. Sally had cleared out with Big Charlie, another black who was on the station then. Harry wanted a drink of spirits from Mother while he told her of all the terrible things he would do to Sally when he found her – beat her, kick her. At first Mother refused, then thinking to save Sally, she said, "Harry, if I give you a drink you must promise me you won't beat and kick Sally". Harry promised faithfully and when he was leaving Mother said, "Now Harry, don't forget your promise." "No Missus", said Harry, "I won't beat or kick Sally, Maybe just pull her hair a bit to make her remember."[980]

Patrick Costello's reminiscences near Bet Bet (circa 1848-52) recalls a violent sexual assault and a colonist's response: 'a gin whose husband had been shot and who had two children, was taken by Mrs. Allen out of pity and she kept her about the station...[a] black tried to make love to the lubra and as she would have nothing to do with him, he gave her a terrible beating...the gin told Mrs. Allen that the black had beaten her.'[981] On the goldfields itself, miners such as Carl Lagergren claimed that he and others had often acted as mediators between Djadjawurrung men and women when alcohol abuse occurred in their community:

> When they have been fortunate enough to get hold of spirits, cognac or other spirits it does not take long before they become trance like and start a so called "corroboree" or dance where both men and women start to make a lot of noise

[980] Ila Broome, cited in Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District. p.34
[981] Costello, Patrick Costello; Narrative of His Life as a Port Phillip Pioneer. p.16 Also see: Niall, Georgiana: A Biography of Georgiana Mccrae.

> and douse ear piercing noise...A truthfully scary scene which becomes even more scarier when the men reaches a more trance like behaviour and starts to hit the women with all their powers and these women see themselves as fortunate if there was nearby a tent occupied by white people. This way she could seek protection against the mens loving hand, showing their love...and many times it happened to me as well as my friends that you had to go out and perform a piece [peace] making act.[982]

A Batey recalled that a party of non-Indigenous people's appearance 'at the scene of 'an aboriginal beating his lubra' put a 'stop to the proceedings', whereupon the Aboriginal woman cried 'That one always him beat me'.[983]

In gold mining areas where internecine fighting and feuding still raged, such as in Gippsland, there are many reports of non-Indigenous people and authorities attempting to act as peace brokers or as hosts for the refugees. Typical of the reportage[984] given over to internecine warfare during the gold rush period and a number of intermediary measures taken by the authorities and local non-Indigenous people is that provided by historian Charles Daley:

> In 1854, the Lake blacks killed four Omeo blacks, and on January 27 1855, the Omeo blacks attacked the blacks at Sale, and several were killed or wounded. Although the blacks' camp was close to the police station, and some of the local natives sought shelter in settlers' homes, the raiders showed extreme boldness....Later in the year there was another incursion of northern blacks. One Sale black was speared and others attacked at The Heart. Some of the invaders had guns, and nearly all the male population of the district was sworn

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[982] Lagergren, Journal and Letters.

[983] Batey, Reminiscences. p.96

[984] Numerous newspaper reports corroborate Daley's précis of the events. See: "The Aborigines."; Gippsland Guardian, "Conflict among Aborigines-Two Deaths."; "Letter to the Editor." Correspondents actively called for the Colonial authorities to intervene in Aboriginal feuding, ceremonies and law. A correspondent at Gippsland was surprised about the Government's inaction in the face of 'another serious outbreak' of hostilities. Cited in: Gippsland Guardian, "The Gippsland Aborigines.". Wesson has chronicled numerous instances in the wider Gippsland region whereupon missionaries, police and other authorities attempted to intervene in Aboriginal's customary practices. In some instances, non-Indigenous anthropologists such as Howitt actively encouraged the staging of traditional ceremonies. For a fuller discussion see: Wesson, "The Aborigines of Eastern Victoria and Far South-Eastern New South Wales, 1830-1910: An Historical Geography." The Chief Commissioner of Police took active steps at Royal Park, Melbourne, to intervene in customary law being enacted in 1862. See: Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria (Melbourne: Victoria Parliament, 1862). p.13

> in as special constabulary...On September 7th, 1855, between one hundred and two hundred blacks from the Tambo River came near Sale to avenge the attack. They named five natives they intended to kill...The threatened blacks got away to Tarraville with police protection.[985]

William Craig, a miner at Mt Cole, described how a party of non-Indigenous miners formed a 'council' to deliberate on what to do about three Djabwurrung men that they believed had committed a payback punishment on a neighbouring clansman. Though lynching them was seriously contemplated it was considered the best course to send for a local justice of the peace. A messenger was duly dispatched and returned with the message that the magistrate had no police to assist him and was too busy. Craig duly noted the little regard afforded by the authorities of internecine legal matters: 'As evidence of the slight importance attached to the murder of a native at that time, it is worth noting that, although information of the crime was later on sent to the police, no one ever appeared to make official enquiry regarding it.' In conclusion the kangaroo court of non-indigenous miners dispensed their judicious wisdom by deliberating that they "let 'em off an' liquor up".[986]

There are some occasions when non-Indigenous interference into customary feuds or cultural issues was actually initiated by Aboriginal people. Korzelinski referred to an instance when feuding Aboriginal groups were to meet together on a friendly basis and that 'To stress the solemnity and importance of the occasion, English neighbours from a nearby settlement were also invited', presumably to perform a role as peace observers.[987]

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[985] C Daley, The Story of Gippsland (Melbourne: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1962). p.35
[986] Craig, My Adventures on the Australian Goldfields. pp.290-3
[987] Robe, ed., Seweryn Korzelinski: Memoirs of Gold-Digging in Australia. pp.18-19 A Clergyman in Gippsland officiated over a 'marriage row' and acted as mediator, ensuring all parties that the

MEDDLING IN MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

At times Aboriginal people demonstrated a great deal of resentment and retaliation towards non-Indigenous people for meddling in Aboriginal marriage customs. William Thomas, Aboriginal Guardian, reported in 1851 that a group of Aboriginal people (Djadjawurrung) had surrounded his cottage in Melbourne and had sought out and demanded a 'poor lubra' named Polly, who had sought refuge with Mrs. Thomas. Polly had lived with a non-Indigenous shepherd on JM Sanger's Avoca run and was considered to be 'one of the most modest, well-conducted females, in many respects highly civilized.' The Guardian's wife had provided succor to Polly by hiding her in the dining-room and Thomas managed to persuade the angry group of Aboriginal people to leave. Thomas reported that she reconciled with her shepherd, married him and returned to Avoca.[988] Elizabeth Ramsay Laye, a visitor to the Avoca area, was informed of an almost identical enactment of intervention by a pastoralist family, on behalf of a Djadjawurrung woman named Lucy. On this occasion violence was resorted to by both sides whereby a local pastoralist 'fired amongst them' and in reply, the 'natives so much enraged that they showed more courage on the occasion than they usually display.'[989] The Reverend Mereweather also interceded on behalf of an Aboriginal woman named Lucy, this Lucy being from an unidentified 'Murray River tribe', who had been betrothed to Charley, a 'black fellow'. Charley came to Mereweather 'humbly petitioning that I would persuade [Lucy] to give herself up as his wife'. Charley's imploring fell on deaf ears, much to his disgust.[990] A very similar event appears to have transpired at Anderson's Creek Diggings in 1860. A non-

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ceremony should be "like um white fellow." Cited in Leslie and Cowie, eds., The Wind Still Blows: Early Gippsland Diaries. p.29

[988] M Cannon, Who Killed the Koories? (Melbourne: Reed, 1993). pp.260-1

[989] Ramsay-Laye, Social Life and Manners in Australia. pp.61-4

[990] Mereweather, Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia, 1850-3. pp.141-3

Indigenous miner provided evidence which 'showed that the blacks [Kurnai clansmen: Tarra Bobby and Billy Logan] had given great provocation to a white woman who had a black lubra in her hut; and that the man, to frighten the blacks away, took up a gun, and when the blacks were about a hundred yards off fired, not knowing it to be loaded...The white man was fined 5 pounds, as damages to the two blacks'.[991]

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

The environmental changes that occurred as a result of both alluvial and deep lead mining were profound. However devastating the gold mining was on the physical environment of Victoria, it needs to be borne in mind that the gold period was the second wave. The first phase was the pastoral period, beginning effectively in 1835.[992] This is an important point with dramatic implications for Aboriginal policy in the nineteenth century. The scenery that miners arriving in the1850s viewed was not a pristine one, though they often portrayed it as so in their writings and artwork, seldom acknowledging that they were in fact party to the second wave of dispossession and environmental devastation.

The pastoralists, the first wave of usurpers, were in no doubt as to the disaster that millions of sheep had wrought upon both the environment and Aboriginal people. The extremely rapid diminution by sheep of plant foods that Aboriginal people had previously subsisted upon had manifestly altered the eco-system and consequently the

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[991] , "The Aborigines."

[992] A great number of non-Indigenous people had at various times explored, visited, established camps and colonized specific locales of Victoria in the guise of convict settlements, whaling and sealing camps, military forts and pastoral runs prior to 1835 but the widespread occupation of what was then the Port Phillip District did not commence in earnest until June 1835. For further discussion see: D Cahir, "The Wathawurrung: Conciliation and Conflict," Research Thesis (unpub), University of Ballarat, 2001.

inter-cultural relations that prevailed on the Colonial frontier. Aboriginal informants complained bitterly to Victorian squatters and others throughout the 1830s and 40s of the profound changes to vital plant ecology by the introduced livestock.[993] The squatters noted the key social changes this effected such as a hitherto unknown dependence upon non-Indigenous people by Aboriginal people. [994] To the miners, however, pastoralism and Western-styled agriculture were largely viewed as being benign, in regards to Aboriginal people, and indigenous flora and fauna. A common theme in miners and other commentator's writings and pictorial works is that the squatter's hand had not spoilt the Australian bush, and that mining alone was the great despoiler of nature.[995] The outworking of this impediment on their vision was the inability to understand that even in areas where mining had not adulterated the physical landscape; the essential bio-mass had irrevocably been transformed, thus rendering Indigenous-styled agriculture and traditional lifestyles considerably compromised, particularly in some areas.[996]

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[993] GA Robinson recorded (February 10, 1841) that a group of Wathawurrung people, less than three years after the occupation of land in the Ballarat district, lamented the loss of their staple food to J McLeod, a squatter near Buninyong, stating that 'there were no murnong about Geelong. It was like Port Phillip all gone the Bulgana [cattle] and sheep eat it all.' Cited in: Clark, ed., The Journals of George a Robinson, Jan.1839-Sept.1840.

[994] ES Parker, Assistant Protector to the Aborigines reported (16 March, 1839) that 'all the settlers whom I met with on the journey were of the opinion that the Aborigines were necessarily greatly distressed for food, owing to the destruction of the "murnong", a tuberous-rooted plant formerly covering the plains of this country, but now entirely cropped off by the sheep and cattle. They expressed their earnest hope that the government would make suitable arrangements for supplying the Natives with food, as it was only under the pressure of hunger that they were disposed to meddle with flocks.' Cited in: M Lakic and R Wrench, eds., Through Their Eyes; an Historical Record of Aboriginal People of Victoria as Documented by the Officials of the Port Phillip Protectorate 1839-1841 (Melbourne: Museum of Victoria, 1994).. A Batey confirmed this by noting that 'On arriving in 1846 [Sunbury] and thereafter Myrnong digging was unknown to us, for the all sufficient reason that livestock seemingly had eaten out that form of vegetation.' Batey, Reminiscences. p.91.

[995] William Little of Ballarat wrote of 'later comers in the ampler years – the youngest of the 'fifties – pitched their tents upon this virgin scene of native worth.' Little, William Little of Ballarat: Some Writings.

[996] In 1858 a Select committee of the Legislative Council of Victoria was appointed to enquire into the present condition of the Aborigines and the best means of alleviating their absolute wants. A response by Daniel Bunce, from Geelong, to enquires made by the *SCLCV* included the recommendation that Wathawurrung people be occupied in their former habits such as 'strip bark, dig for mrynong, burrow for porcupines and wombats'. It would appear that Bunce and presumably others were unaware that

Alluvial gold mining historian Barry McGowan points out, even in its more primitive forms, 'affected the environment from the outset and was not as benign in its effects as present day landscapes might suggest.'[997] Observers of the goldfields were aghast at how the gold diggers had transformed the bush into waste land. 'The diggers', William Howitt observed, 'seem to have two especial propensities, those of firing guns and felling trees'. 'Every tree is felled', he remarked of the diggings, 'every feature of Nature is annihilated'.[998] Miners such as George Rowe vividly described the dismantling of the bush around them in great rapidity.[999] Moreover, Rowe explicitly linked the wanton rape of the forest with the 'withdrawal' of Aboriginal people: 'It is very astounding how rapidly the trees disappear where the diggers take up their residence[.] behind our tent when we first put it up to the top of [a] hill half a mile off it was a forest[.] in a month it was all cut down and there was not a tree to interrupt the sight of the top of the hill[.] so destructive are the European race, the black man falls back in the bush and decreases[.] the animals become scarce.'[1000]

In some areas, traditional food resources were severely depleted by competition from non-Indigenous traders such as occurred on the Upper Murray regions. T Mitchell, a correspondent to the Central Board of Aborigines reported in 1866 from the Upper Murray that the condition of the Aboriginal people in his district 'has not improved in consequence of the scarcity of native game, fish, and c., attributable in great measure

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myrnong had become very rare in the Geelong district over fifteen years prior. Cited in Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria. p.299

[997] Cited in Barry McGowan, '*Mullock Heaps and Tailing Mounds*' McCalman, ed., Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia. p.90

[998] Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold. pp.176,252

[999] Howitt wrote of the amazing propensity of the diggers to fell trees. See: Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold. Louise Meredith considered the mining landscape to be 'more irredeemably hideous than the bleakest mining village in any English coal or iron district.' Meredith, Over the Straits: A Visit to Victoria. Thomas Woolner considered that the Mt Alexander diggings in 1852-3 was 'what one might suppose the earth would appear after the day of judgment has emptied all the graves'. Woolner, Diary.

[1000] Rowe, Correspondence. JS Prout, also a miner cum artist on the Victorian goldfields noted too the depletion of traditional food sources. Prout observed in 1852 that 'animals are becoming much more scarce than formerly.' Prout, An Illustrated Handbook of the Voyage to Australia. p.22

to their vicinity to the diggings and free selectors ... they fish as usual; the fish are not so numerous as they used to be, in consequence, I presume, of several parties having made a trade of it to supply Beechworth and the neighboring towns and goldfields'.[1001] In the Lake Bolac district, too, the traditional eel harvesting practiced for thousands of years by a number of language groups including the Djabwurrung and the Wathawurrung was effectively stopped by non-Indigenous fishermen's non-sustainable practices. In August 1863, Charles Gray, the local guardian at Wickliffe, wrote to William Thomas, and informed him that: 'The blacks in this district have lately complained of their being prevented from catching eels at Lake Bolac by some men at Ararat – who by placing a net across the outlet of the lake where it is discharging itself – secure every fish that may be passing thereby...the blacks are not ever allowed to participate.'[1002]

Other correspondents commented on the ecological imbalance and particularly the domino-type effect this had on Aboriginal people that was occurring as a result of colonization,[1003] and added the moral imperative to provide some redress for Aboriginal people: 'No work can be more manifestly or more imperatively the duty of the colonists of an entirely new country like this than that of providing for its aboriginal inhabitants ... The food of the aborigines retreats as the European advances ... In the very names of places where the native word has been retained, is often recorded the deprivation of the black by the white man. Ballarat was a favourite

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[1001] T Mitchell in Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fifth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in Victoria. p.16

[1002] Gray 20 August 1863 to William Thomas in Papers Vol.19. Cited in Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria. p.116 At Mordialloc too there was 'injury done to the Aborigines by the wholesale destruction of eels by netting.' Cited in Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fourth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. p.11

[1003] A company operating on Lake Moira during spawning time was reputed to be destroying the survival foods of Aboriginal people in that region. See: Hibbins, Barmah Chronicles.p.7

camping place; the word signifies to recline on the elbow, or *balla*...'[1004] The Central Board of Aborigines also alerted the Government about the 'vast quantities of fish destroyed annually by netting and the swivel gun...Both fish and game are ruthlessly killed in such a manner as to injure, not only the interests of the blacks but those of the colonists generally.'[1005] The declining fish stock in Victoria was so serious a matter that specific legislation (Fisheries Bill) was drafted in 1873. Acknowledgement of the catastrophe that had befallen Aboriginal people in particular, whose traditional and adopted monetarist economy depended very heavily on the availability of good fish stocks, can be gauged by an amendment proposed to the new bill, which was accepted without discussion, 'having for its object the allowing Aboriginal natives to take fish in any way for their own use.'[1006] Miner JM Smith was unequivocal in his damning opinion of the European who 'robs them of their wealth and devastates their country – and calls it honour and glory.'[1007] The imbalance sometimes had unexpected windfalls. Judging from the frequent reports from miners and others, some fauna became more prolific with the advent of mining, which may have led to at least a temporary glut in the number of certain species such as possums, native cats[1008] and snakes. One writer to the *Argus* (20 October, 1860) considered that the snake plague afflicting Victoria was attributable to the 'decrease of the aborigines in the colony', noting that the 'blacks were the only check to the rapid increase of the serpent tribe. They were our Australian ibis' and recommended employing Aboriginal people to cull them as being the most obvious solution to a serious problem: 'Our

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[1004] Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fifth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in Victoria. p.13

[1005] Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fifth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in Victoria. p.18

[1006] "Fisheries Bill," *Argus* 18 September 1873.

[1007] Cuffley, ed., Send the Boy to Sea: The Memoirs of a Sailor on the Goldfields by James Montagu Smith. p.72

[1008] Blandowski, Personal Observations in the Central Parts of Victoria. p.21

aborigines are peculiarly expert in dealing with these reptiles; and if a reward were paid on the production of the heads or tails, the black fellow might not only eat his snake, but have his reward also.'[1009]

Of an infinitely more serious note was the damage to the environment and the Aboriginal cultural landscape being done by gold mining practices such as hydraulic sluicing and later dredging which was so devastating that inquiries were held and eventually some regulations came into force which sought to limit the obliteration to water courses and adjacent land that these mining practices caused.[1010] The scale of destruction is better grasped when it is considered that according to geologist T Dickson: 'Almost every [Victorian] creek in a recognized goldfield area has been extensively sluiced and numerous tunnels, like that at Pound Bend on the Yarra River, were cut through narrow spurs to divert large sections of the river and make the river bed available to sluicing.'[1011] The immense damage to the physical environment by gold mining operations was commonly touted to be the reason for the absence of Aboriginal people in a region.[1012] Typical of this appraisal is Michael Goonan's, whose 'mother's people lived, in 1854, not far from (now) Yackandandah'. Goonan contended that the tribe in this area were 'shy and quite harmless' and that 'By degrees they shifted back to more uncivilized parts until a black fellow was rarely

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[1009] "Snakes," *Argus* October 20 1860.

[1010] McGowan demonstrates that at a Rocky Mountain claim at Beechworth, of which there were a score 'an area of about eighty acres had been worked out and more than three million cubic yards of dirt removed, of which all but a fraction remained in the old workings or in Reid's creek into which the tail water passed.' McCalman, ed., Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia. p.94. E Parker noted the debilitating effects on Aboriginal health resulting from environmental devastations. See: E Parker, The Aborigines of Australia: A Lecture (Melbourne: Hugh McColl, 1854).

[1011] T Dickson in Sullivan, ed., A Toast to the Days of Gold. p.14

[1012] William Howitt contended that: 'These poor creatures adhere chiefly to the banks of rivers, which yield fish and wild fowl; for the kangaroo is now scarce wherever the white man is numerous.' Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold. p.143. JM Smith observed that Aboriginal people 'resist him not, but move further into the bush and as the whites progress they retire'. Cuffley, ed., Send the Boy to Sea: The Memoirs of a Sailor on the Goldfields by James Montagu Smith. p.72

seen.'[1013] Similarly, Katherine McK noted that near the Daylesford diggings they had previously caught 'bandicoots, wattlebirds and blackfish from the creek' until 'men with guns and dogs came from the mining towns and camps, and soon the wild game was exterminated, even on the rough ranges.'[1014] In 1861, correspondents from across Victoria were asked to comment on 'where they most frequently congregate':

> In nearly every case the correspondents state that they congregate around public houses. In towns where there are public houses and on the goldfields. Where there are neither goldfields nor towns they frequent the stations of the squatters. They appear to neglect in a great degree hunting and fishing, and prefer the populous districts of the white man to the solitudes of the forests and plains.[1015]

A number of correspondents also noted that 'their original food is getting more and more scanty'[1016] and thus obliquely deduced the connection between their attachment to goldfields where money and food was available and their shunning of the degraded forests and plains where subsistence was problematical. Undoubtedly, the destruction of the natural environment by gold mining did indeed prompt the 'withdrawal' of Aboriginal people as camping and hunting places were despoiled, yet there is evidence that the breaking up of large pastoral leases led to environmental degradation which also profoundly impacted on Aboriginal people. It is ironic that in the non-Indigenous diggers' efforts in the 1850s both for the right to vote and access

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[1013] Ronan, ed., Early Dederang 1854-1956 from the Notebook of Micheal James Goonan. p.10 Historian JO Randell implicitly concurs with the notion of Aboriginal people retiring from goldfields activity as Randell could locate in the *McIvor Times* 'but two references to the natives' (both in 1866) including a report that a party of aborigines had recently visited the district but soon returned to their hunting grounds. Cited in J Randell, Shire of Mcivor (Burwood: Anderson, 1985). p.34 Similar conclusions of this nature are drawn by Weston Bate. See Bate, Lucky City. It is something of a ironic contradiction that JO Randell's publication contains an illustration of the *McIvor Diggings, 26 July 1853* which represents a party of four Djadjawurrung Aboriginal people mingling with the non-Indigenous diggers in the centre foreground beside an Aboriginal scarred tree doubling as a tree used by non-Indigenous diggers to nail up notices. See:Randell, Shire of Mcivor.

[1014] McK, Old Days and Gold Days. p.40

[1015] Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.14

[1016] FW Spieseke in Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament.

to ownership of a piece of land occupied by squatters, there was an invocation to past memories of Aboriginal proprietorship.

> The same right by which these squatters first grasped the soil from the thriftless and improvident aborigines, now in the present posture of affairs, holds equally good against themselves...The claims of the natives were as valid against the squatters, as those of the squatters against the superior demands of an agricultural population. But, as the original possessors were obliged to yield, so must in their turn those who supplanted them.[1017]

Goodman has aptly noted 'In these debates, the memory of one dispossession informed thoughts about another.[1018]

The subsequent carving up of pastoral runs by selectors seriously disrupted Aboriginal peoples' ability to use traditional means to sustain themselves, a fact articulated by James Rutherford in a letter to the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in May 1878: 'The aborigines look forward anxiously to the yearly supplies more so now than previously. Their sources of subsistence are thoroughly cut off by selectors taking possession of their hunting grounds.'[1019] Twenty years earlier a similar report was forwarded by John Aitken on the upper Goulburn River to the 1858 Select Committee of the Victorian Legislative Council on the Aborigines. Aitken offered that the 'difficulty of obtaining their usual food is so great within a certain distance of the towns, from the amount of enclosed and cultivated land, that it has the effect of keeping them back in the less populous districts.'[1020] Not all areas suffered as much as others and the intensive alluvial goldfields were spread out, both geographically and chronologically. In some areas it would appear that Aboriginal

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[1017] "Editorial," *Ballarat Star* 10 June 1857.
[1018] Goodman, "Making an Edgier History of Gold." p.32
[1019] J Rutherford, Central Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, Australian Archives, Melbourne.
[1020] Victorian Government, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines,; Together with the Proceedings of Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices. p.33

people were still able to come together in very large numbers (200-600) and able to sustain themselves, from a food resource point of view, in an uncompromised manner.[1021] Aboriginal people were reported, by almost all the respondents to the 1858 Select Committee's enquiries, to be eking out an existence amongst the mining towns or residing on pastoral runs. Dislocation from their lands and cultural heritage engendered stressed and disappointed communities with the resultant internecine violence that observers on the goldfields noted with regularity.[1022]

Surprisingly, commentators on the goldfields such as William Howitt noted the sizeable destruction of the natural environment, the subsequent disappearance of some staple foods, prevailing illnesses resulting from poor nutrition and lack of shelter, combined with the total disenfranchisement of their lands and laws, yet did not take into account these mitigating factors when broaching the topic of excessive alcohol consumption by Aboriginal people.[1023]

This chapter aimed to give finer brush strokes to the discourse of social and environmental disruptions to Aboriginal lifestyles which were precipitated by the gold rushes. The goldfields of Victoria, it has been demonstrated, had a caustic effect upon the social and physical landscape of Victoria as a whole, yet for Aboriginal people it has been seen to have been extraordinarily catastrophic, in particular their ability to continue their traditional economies in an extensively degraded environment and to maintain their traditional social fabric whilst being overwhelmed by large populations

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[1021] In the Upper Murray region camps of 200 Aboriginals were observed utilizing fish traps and hunting at times of inter-tribal conferences. Cited in: Wesson, "The Aborigines of Eastern Victoria and Far South-Eastern New South Wales, 1830-1910: An Historical Geography." p.136, 174

[1022] See James Bonwick's description of a violent battle between rival clans at Wickliffe for a representative example of what was often alcohol fueled fights that occurred amongst Aboriginal people. Sayers, ed., Western Victoria- the Narrative of an Educational Tour in 1857. pp.178-181

[1023] W Howitt wrote that near the Ovens River diggings 'many of them were in the most wretched condition from measles and influenza. We observed that there were whole flocks of children, but that nearly all were half-castes.' Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold. p.185

of immigrant miners. It can be seen that during the gold rush period Aboriginal population levels decreased dramatically, which was attributed to venereal and respiratory diseases, sub-standard nutrition, falling fertility rates, deaths from excessive alcohol consumption, drunken fighting and 'in some cases, to cruelty and ill-treatment'. Though there were proclamations that inter-racial frontier violence had all but dissipated, there were a few recorded massacres. The gold period, however, was one characterized more by a large number of incidental violent occurrences, both inter-racial and inter-necine, often fuelled by excessive alcohol usage and occasionally by the failure to acquire unction of what was required to co-habitat cordially. As time passed in Victoria, Goodman argues, 'less would be heard of the injustice of a people deprived of their traditional sources of food, and more of the 'propensity of the race' to this or that weakness.'[1024] The incidence of Aboriginal people attempting to creatively adapt to the new social order and to bring fresh Aboriginal perspectives to bear on the problems besetting their communities has been shown to have been sizeable, and regrettably has been an understudied topic that deserves greater acknowledgement and understanding.

The significance of less visible mechanisms by which Aboriginal people in Victoria were dislocated, such as interference in traditional mortuary ceremonies, food gathering practices and legal matters, cannot be understated. The altering of traditional living patterns was a contributing factor to a community wracked by alcohol abuse and alternately neglected and controlled by Colonial governments and Christian missionaries, a topic which is assumed in the following chapter.

[1024] Goodman, Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s. p.18

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE AGENTS OF CONTROL; GOVERNMENTS AND MISSIONS

Substantial research upon the attitudes, policies and agencies of the Victorian Government and Missionary bodies towards Aboriginal people' lives in the study period has been undertaken by a number of scholars including Barwick,[1025] Foxcroft,[1026] Anderson,[1027] Galloway,[1028] Christie,[1029] and more recently Broome[1030] and Clark.[1031] This chapter shall outline the relative absence of policy relating to Aboriginal affairs in Victoria during the 1850s and discuss the considerable impact Government and Missionary organizations during the 1860s exerted upon Aboriginal's lives, particularly in auriferous regions.

The New South Wales Legislative Council Select Committee appointed to assess the Aboriginal Protectorate system in 1849 heard from a large body of respondents (squatters and officials, but not Aboriginal people) who also gave their suggestions on how to better the conditions of Aboriginal people in Victoria. The Legislative Council, on the basis of almost all the respondents believing that the Protectorate had been a failure, recommended the abolition of the Aboriginal Protectorate and regretted that it could suggest no other coherent policy with which to replace it. Innumerable suggestions were made to the Select Committee including removing Aboriginal

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[1025] Barwick and Barwick, eds., Rebellion at Coranderrk.
[1026] E Foxcroft, Australian Native Policy: Its History, Especially in Victoria (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1941).
[1027] Anderson, "The Aboriginal Experiment: European Racial Discourse and Practice in Gippsland, Victoria, 1860-1895."
[1028] W Galloway, "Government and Popular Attitudes to the Victorian Aborigines 1837-67," B.A (Hons.), Melbourne University, 1962.
[1029] Christie, Aboriginals in Colonial Victoria.
[1030] Broome, Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800.
[1031] Clark, The Northern Wathawurrung and Andrew Porteous, 1860-1877.

people by sea to different districts away from their accustomed haunts, separating Aboriginal children from the adults and the placing them in seminaries for their education, and the establishment of Police Benches who would distribute supplies for Aboriginal people via pastoralists in the various districts.[1032]

One of the few concrete steps taken by the NSW Colonial Government was to retain William Thomas, the Assistant Protector for the Western Port District, and bestow upon him the title of 'Guardian of Aborigines'. Thomas, however, concentrated his energies on the two language groups (Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung) in the environs of Melbourne and had very little physical presence in outlying areas. Thomas's reports during the 1850s reflect his continuing associations almost solely with the Boonwurrung and the Woiwurrung and with Aboriginal people from across Victoria and the other Colonies who came to Melbourne.[1033] In every other district the Commissioners of Crown Lands were to act as protectors, and to look after the temporal wants of other Aboriginal in other districts. Judging from the reports submitted by the Crown Land Commissioners, they did not interfere much with the Aboriginal people in their districts, whereas Thomas frequently intervened, discountenancing their visits to Melbourne, appealing for calm during drunken sprees and mediating in labour relations.[1034] Thomas was viewed as having exceptional

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[1032] See: New South Wales Legislative Council Select Committee, Aborigines and the Protectorate: Report from the Select Committee on the Aborigines and the Protectorate (Sydney: 1849).

[1033] W Thomas sent weekly reports to the Surveyor General throughout the 1850s. The majority of these reports relate to his visits to incarcerated Aboriginal people at Pentridge, ensuring the physical needs of the Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung people were supplied, 'keeping the blacks out of Melbourne' and acting as agent for immigrant Aboriginal peoples. See: W Thomas, Registered Inward Correspondence to the Surveyor General from the Guardian of Aborigines, Public Records Office of Victoria, Melbourne.

[1034] As representative example Thomas' reports for several weeks in June 1856 detail his efforts to have the wages earnt by six Aboriginal men for barkstripping paid to them by a publican on the Anderson Creek Diggings. Thomas, Registered Inward Correspondence to the Surveyor General from the Guardian of Aborigines.

qualifications and experience in Aboriginal matters and was often consulted by successive Governments.

The 1850s have generally been described as a decade wherein Aboriginal people were overlooked by the new Victorian Government (separation from New South Wales occurred in 1850). Some writers such as EJ Foxcroft almost a century later, considered that 'Euthanasia in fact, has been the aim of native policy in Victoria after 1850...The policy adopted between 1850 and 1860 was, as can be seen [paltry sums were afforded towards the reserves and the care of Aboriginal people], a half hearted one.'[1035] Others such as Ian Clark and Michael Christie thought that 'This decade may be characterized as one of Government neglect of the Aborigines.'[1036] Certainly, editorials and letters to the Editor[1037] of the *Argus* during the 1850s indicate some degree of the ire and indignation elements of the non-Indigenous community felt about the Government's perceived apathy and inaction to Aboriginal peoples' disenfranchisement of their land. A lengthy letter titled 'What is Government doing for the Aborigines?' attempted to remind the Government that there were still 'to be found individuals laboring under their auspices, in connection with the aborigines, who feel deeply interested in their welfare, and who long to do something effectually to promote it' and how a section of the community 'grieves to think that under the fostering care of the British Government, and within the immediate range of a benign

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[1035] Foxcroft, Australian Native Policy: Its History, Especially in Victoria. pp.100,103

[1036] Clark, Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria. p.44 The first report from the CBA in 1861 also acknowledged that 'the imperfect manner in which the physical wants of the blacks had been previously attended to' was evident in all parts of the Colony. Cited in Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.4

[1037] "A Plea on Behalf of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Victoria." Historian David Goodman has identified a number of commentators in the 1850s from various sources who also denied the pernicious official assumption of *terra nullius*. RL Milne argued 'You have taken possession of a country that is not yours,' Milne insisted, 'Ye have disinherited and slain its owners.' Cited in Goodman, Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s. p.17. Samuel Mossman concurred adding 'These rightful possessors of the land appear little better off than the colonists' dogs.' Mossman, The Gold Regions of Australia. p.72. Also see: "Editorial."

Christianity, there should be found in our very midst those whose social and moral state is so groveling and corrupt.'[1038] 'Amicus' goes on to decry the dire plight of the Aboriginal people, rallying against the public pacifying their consciences with 'bare acknowledgement' and 'occasional prayer'. Furthermore, the writer implores the Government to ameliorate their condition (by forced separation) and emphatically lambasts the Government for its sluggardness and tightfistedness:

> No energetic movement at all adequate to the emergency has been attempted. We may perhaps give the Government credit for a certain amount of sincerity; but it has always been satisfied with half measures and meager efforts; and whilst some would affirm that it has been prodigal in its recent expenditure, it has been parsimonious towards the poor aborigines...Even the few persons who are now more immediately identified with the natives, have to complain of the little encouragement they receive from Government...fully cognizant of its powerful obligations – yes, powerful obligations – to those from the usurpation of whose golden soil, there has been reaped such a glorious and abundant harvest[?][1039]

A lengthy editorial in the *Argus* (17 March, 1856) frequently punctuated with 'bitter indignation' at the Government's 'basest meanness and dishonesty in our treatment of this unhappy race', insisted upon the 'wretched pittance' allocated to Aboriginal affairs to be replaced 'for fair and even liberal treatment'. In what must have been a rather radical charge for a major metropolitan newspaper to demand of the Government, Samuel Wilson, the *Argus* editor, did not mince with words, expressing his dismay that: 'From the land taken from these people gold to the value of upwards of thirty millions of sterling has been raised. In addition to this, millions upon millions worth of produce has been taken...Of all these millions – from annual public revenue amounting to 2,792,152 pounds sterling, we are content to award 1,250 pounds.' Wilson was adamant that no expense should be spared and contended that:

[1038] Amicus, "What Is the Government Doing for the Aborigines?," *Argus* 28 July 1854. p.7
[1039] Amicus, "What Is the Government Doing for the Aborigines?."

> We mean what we say, literally. We would feed and clothe every black in Victoria, and would do this regardless of expense. If it cost ten thousand – well! If twenty thousand – well! If a hundred thousand – still well! Were they able to strike a bargain for the land, we should gladly purchase it at hundreds of thousands of pounds. It is dishonest to withhold it, because they are ignorant and helpless. We would feed them and clothe them as long as a black was left amongst us, and when the last was gathered to that Creator of whom he at present knows so little, we should rejoice to think that at the last great day, he could not arraign us for having behaved towards him here below, like a tyrant, a coward, and a swindler.[1040]

There were, however, also correspondents to the Editor who considered that institutions established for Aboriginal people such as the school and refuge at Mt Franklin in central Victoria were in their opinion a 'complete and sufficiently transparent failure', with the implicit judgment that it should be abolished.[1041] In Victorian Parliamentary debates, too, there was dissent over the worthiness of supporting Aboriginal establishments. Some Members of Parliament such as Mr. Snodgrass 'very much questioned if any good had been done to the aborigines by Mr. Parker's [school, farm and refuge at Mt Franklin] establishment, or any other similar one'[1042] and Mr. Fawkner opined that compensation to nearby squatters was of paramount importance as parts of the Loddon Aboriginal Reserve were not being used productively.[1043] In Parliamentary question time it was asked why the Goulburn and Loddon Aboriginal stations, given their proximity to the gold diggings, were not 'parcelled out and put up to auction in suitable lots, for the benefit of the revenue and encouragement of an agricultural class on that part of this very rich gold country'.[1044] It was envisaged by many in the years immediately following announcements that the Protectorate had been an 'abject failure' and that the Aboriginal Stations would not be

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[1040] Editor, "The Aborigines." p.4
[1041] 'Special Commissioner', 3 June 1853, cited in E Parker, "The Loddon Aboriginal Establishment," *Argus* 30 June 1853. p.7
[1042] "Aboriginal Reserve on the Loddon," *Argus* 5 November 1853.
[1043] "Aboriginal Protectorate of the Loddon," *Argus* 14 June 1854. p.6
[1044] *Argus* 14 June 1854. p.6

kept for the use of Aboriginal people who still frequented those districts but would be disposed of.

Increasingly, any discussion during the 1850s in relation to supplying Aboriginal people's physical and spiritual needs (for the two were usually viewed as inseparable) polarized into two camps, or viewpoints. Some writers opined that as they were dying out and their barbaric tendencies had not diminished, nothing should be done, bar providing for their immediate physical wants and recording as much as possible about this 'interesting branch of the human family' before they became extinct. Most favoured saving the youths by supporting the philanthropic works of concerned individuals, rather than Government initiatives involving capital expenditure.[1045]

Thomas had been instructed in 1850 to submit suggestions about reserves 'in places known to still be frequented by the aborigines' to which he opined that large reserves would be useless as their numbers were fast diminishing, their propensity to reside in the one place was non-existent and their speedy extinction was inevitable. Reserves of 640 acres for each tribe were all that he could recommend.[1046] Shortly afterwards, in 1852, Thomas highly recommended a community of Aboriginal people in Victoria be instituted made up of Aboriginal children who had been removed from their families in order to avert the extinction of the Aboriginal race. Thomas knew his proposals

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[1045] In a letter to the Editor, a 'Friend to the Oppressed' challenges cynics to visit the residence of a Mr Hinkins who had care of two Aboriginal orphaned youths and to witness their 'progress'. The author concludes by declaring that 'Mr Hinkins deserves the thanks of the community at large' and that when 'proper means are employed' positive outcomes can be anticipated. The writer does not recommend or suggest Government initiated establishments for Aboriginal people or for that matter, Government support for Aboriginal initiatives. See: Friend to the Oppressed, "The Aborigines," *Argus* 25 March 1856.

[1046] Thomas reiterated this point in 1853 insisting that 'There should be in every district a spot reserved for them, that they can call their own, whether they frequent it or not, if but once or twice a year only; there provisions should be kept for them, and an annual distribution of blankets made.' William Thomas in Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address. p.10

would be viewed as 'unfeeling' but considered it would be a 'deed of mercy'.[1047] The Victorian Government did not implement all of Thomas's proposals, making no legislative provisions for the legal removal of Aboriginal children from their families or any attempt to establish large reserves in areas where people continued to live predominately traditional lifestyles. In addition the Government dissolved the Native Police Corps and was not prepared to spend more than approximately 1,000 pounds per year on Aboriginal affairs, though four new Missions and several new reserves were established between 1851 and 1860.[1048]

In response to the 1858 Select Committee recommendations, the Victorian Government in June 1860 established a Central Board, the first of its kind in Australia, with a nine-point plan. Amongst these recommendations were the establishment of permanent reserves,[1049] prohibiting Aboriginals from visiting towns and goldfields, appointing of local guardians whose function was to act as honorary correspondents to the Central Board (for the Protection of Aborigines)[1050] and to supply foodstuffs, clothing and other supplies. Other recommendations included the erection of a hospital specifically for the use of Aboriginal people and a central asylum for children and young people.

William Thomas, who had been instrumental in the formulation of the recommendations, had urged that the Government should ensure that Aboriginal

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[1047] W Thomas, 14 September, 1852 in Parker, Aborigines: Return to Address. p.17

[1048] Lake Boga Moravian Mission (1851), Yelta Anglican Mission (1855), Lake Hindmarsh Mission and Acheron Station (1859). Two other Reserves established at this time (1859) were located at Maffra and Steiglitz. See; Felton, A History of Aboriginal Lands and Reserves. pp.6-7

[1049] News of an Aboriginal deputation to the Victorian government to request land that they could farm was widely reported in the newspapers and was widely seen as evidence that Aboriginal people could be 'reclaimed'. See: Broome, Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800. "The Aborigines," *Ballarat Star* 10 March 1859. "The Aborigines of the Goulburn District," *Argus* 8 March 1859.

[1050] The Central Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in the colony of Victoria (CBPA) changed its name to the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in the colony of Victoria (BPA) with the passing of the Act to provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria. For convenience I will hereafter refer in the text to the BPA.

people were consulted widely about the choice of sites where the reserves were to be located, believing that this had been the fundamental reason for past failures. Thomas also implored that the Government should 'not on any account give way to despair but should determinedly try all the possible means that humanity could devise to arrest the decay of the race' and that it 'must make pounds, shillings and pence take second place as did the English Government in abolishing slavery. The ten thousand pounds Thomas advised would be sufficient to 'settle the aboriginal question throughout the colony of Victoria' was never realized.[1051] In the First Report of the Central Board of Aborigines in 1861 their projected expenditure estimates were 11,550 pounds but the Victorian Government effectively 'crippled' Aboriginal affairs by allocating 5,000 pounds only which the Board considered 'quite inadequate to supply the pressing physical wants of the various tribes and left no room for providing for aboriginal and half-caste children, or for training schools'.[1052] The Board thus obstructed from implementing any measures aside from very piecemeal ones, resorted to supplicating the Government to amend the Act relating to Aboriginal people, to enable the CBA 'full power to order as to their residence and maintenance; and to order, also, as to the disposal of orphan and deserted children.' The rationale for this and other measures of controlling Aboriginal peoples' lives such as 'prohibiting [them] from visiting towns and goldfields' was stated to be an attempt to 'protect them as far as possible, and to a certain extent to maintain them'.[1053] Other measures too which appeared to be more progressive, such as the call for permanent reserves to be made for them to reside upon, were in fact intended for their 'better management and control' rather than as a

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[1051] Thomas Papers, Report to the Commissioner of Lands and Survey: Scheme for meeting aboriginal wants (28 July 1859). Cited in Foxcroft, Australian Native Policy: Its History, Especially in Victoria. pp.104-5

[1052] Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.4

[1053] Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament. p.11

bestowing of freehold land for the original owners of the land (chosen by Aboriginal leaders such as Wonga).

> Wonga having seen his friends, the Goulbourn Tribe, comfortably provided for, in 1860 waited upon me again and said he had looked out a spot for the few blacks left in his tribe. I stated that there was a fine reserve for the Yarra Tribe which I had for many years secured for them on both sides of the Yarra River. He said "yes Marminarta you very good but Black fellow no tell you to look out that one country, I want like you get 'em Goulbourne blacks where Black fellows like." I in conjunction with another gentleman left Melbourne for the spot which I found well adapted for them and away from Squatters. Arrangements was made and subsequently with Wonga and another black, & Revd Mr. Green of the Upper Yarra (who had taken much interest in the Aborigines) to form a Deputation to the Central Aboriginal Board. Mr. R Brough Smyth Secretary received our Deputation graciously, & after questioning Wonga suggested that I should officially bring the desire of the Yarra Blacks before the Central Board which I accordingly did with the hedge chart attached. Subsequently I, Wonga and Mr. Green again wait on the Secretary, and have no doubt that eventually Wonga's persevering efforts will be crowned with success, and an Aboriginal training School for half cast and pure Aboriginal children will be formed on Wonga's selected spot.[1054]

In an appendix attached to the CBA's First Report, settlers and others (but no Aboriginal people), were asked to provide their opinions on 'what means would you suggest for adoption as most likely to be beneficial to the natives in your district?' The replies are almost unanimous in their support for stronger prohibition controls, greater supply of food, shelter and clothing, their forcible exclusion from the goldfields, the forcible separation of children from their community and the provision of land reserves or depots exclusively for their use (to receive handouts, cultivate crops and raise livestock). Many respondents considered that nothing could be done 'to better their condition' and opinions were divided as to the perceived usefulness of forming reserves for Aboriginal people. In light of the falling population levels and dire predictions of their impending extinction it was deemed sufficient in the 1860s to follow a negative policy of centralizing the doling out of food and shelter and to reject

[1054] W Thomas, 21 October 1861 in Thomas, Journal.

almost all initiatives directed at empowering Aboriginal people. Subsequently the Board became increasingly authoritarian and dictatorial in its recommendations about Aboriginal people to the Government and scrutinized the Local Guardians to the point where their local knowledge of the Aboriginal people they labored for was often frustrated. Local Guardians such as Andrew Porteous at Carngham, near Ballarat, William Thomas at Mordialloc and Peter Beveridge at Swan Hill made enquiries and applications on behalf of Aboriginal people for grants of land which were ignored or disallowed. Even the issue of where to locate the Mission and Government reserves for Aboriginal people was muddied by new goldfields and townships springing up in all locales of Victoria.[1055] The CBA's second report in 1862 commented: 'it is not a matter for surprise that a site, which is admirably adapted to the purposes of an Aboriginal settlement today, becomes tomorrow useless and unfit, in consequence of the shifting of the white population [in search of gold]'.[1056]

Increasingly throughout the 1860s there was grave concern expressed by some Correspondents as to their 'possible moral improvement'. Whilst it was noted that 'the general condition of the blacks is improved in the districts where stores have been sent', (yet persistent calls for medical help were knocked back by the Board), there was also a pervading opinion that 'as regards their moral condition, I can report no improvement'. The intent of the CBA was as the Protectorate had been, to civilize and Christianise them, in that order of importance. The fiercely independent nature of Aboriginal people, namely their refusal to come under 'the control of the honorary correspondents', collectively work for a master and refrain from frequenting the 'towns and goldfields' was perceived as a slur on their moral character. The excessive

[1055] See; J Tucker, Mission to the Chinese and Aborigines (Sydney: Joseph Cook and Co., 1868).
[1056] Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. p.5

consumption of 'ardent spirits' by Aboriginal people was viewed as the greatest obstacle to this goal, and to this end a great deal of advice was solicited from the 52 Correspondents across Victoria as to how to ameliorate the condition of these 'helpless children'. At first, draconian styled measures such as imprisoning 'the publican who sells spirits to the blacks' and 'adequate punishment inflicted on the black receiving the drink'[1057] were consistently recommended by the CBA to the Victorian Government but it was acknowledged by all that Aboriginal people had a 'ready sale for opossum skin rugs and native implements, with the proceeds of which they can purchase liquors without difficulty' [1058] and also frequented the goldfields as gold fossickers themselves. Honorary correspondents in the goldfields regions such as Andrew Porteous at Carngham, near Ballarat, certainly ascribed to this view, and considered both reactive and proactive measures were necessary to stem the abuse of alcohol consumption among Aboriginal people near the goldfields and towns:

> A few of the young men are generally employed on stations, and receive a small remuneration, but all they receive, both for labor and opossum rugs, is spent on intoxicating liquors, and I fear they will not leave off this evil habit unless prohibited from visiting the goldfields and are allowed to settle on some portion of land where they would take an interest in improving it.[1059]

Porteous's concern was not isolated. The same issue had been expressed during the Aboriginal Protectorate period (1838-1850), but reached its zenith during the gold

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[1057] Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament.

[1058] Central Board of Aborigines, Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. pp.8-15. At Coranderrk Aboriginal people 'made a great number of rugs, which have been sold for about 70 pounds'. Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fourth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. p.5

[1059] Porteous repeatedly raised this concern in all of his reports from 1861-1875. See: Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fifth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in Victoria.

rush.[1060] As already outlined in previous chapters, gold fossicking, trade in possum skin rugs, baskets, primary produce, and employment on pastoral stations after 1850 afforded Aboriginal people a new degree of economic independence. Damaging social effects from alcohol abuse and absence of paternal control were a concern re-iterated many times by well-intentioned Correspondents and Guardians. In his June 1871 report, Porteous advocated a pass system, as he found the local Wathawurrung people could not be restricted and regulated sufficiently to keep them from their commercial activities in the goldfields and towns:

> The tribe still follow their occupations of fishing, hunting and making of opossum rugs, which they barter for stores, but often for grog. It is almost impossible to keep them from visiting the towns, and yet they have no business to transact in those towns except begging for grog and making themselves liable to be arrested under the Vagrant Act. They have no hunting field nor fishing river within these towns, and if they have anything to sell let them apply to the local guardian for a pass for that day, to be within a town to be named in that pass. Most of the tribe are old and feeble and unable to do any work. The young men are able and willing to work, and some of them can do work as well as any white man, but they are like any of the white men, and would spend every shilling they earn upon grog, if they can possibly get it done.[1061]

The frustration of Honorary Correspondents such as Porteous and others to restrict Aboriginal people from frequenting the goldfields, readily obtaining money and over indulging in alcohol,[1062] combined with the Victorian Government's persistent refusals to fund Aboriginal affairs adequately for anything except food, clothes and shelter, greatly contributed to a philosophy of centralising Aboriginal people onto a few reserves and persistent calls for dictatorial control over Aboriginal people as the

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[1060] New South Wales Legislative Council Select Committee, Aborigines and the Protectorate: Report from the Select Committee on the Aborigines and the Protectorate.

[1061] A Porteous (1871) in: Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament.

[1062] Honorary Correspondents near goldfields reported: 'On the goldfields they readily obtain money by exhibiting their skill in throwing the boomerang and spear, and the results in every case are drunkenness and quarrels.' Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fourth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. p.10

only feasible means of caring for Aboriginal people.[1063] In the CBA's fourth report (1864) the matter of forcibly removing Aboriginal children is officially broached and it was Aboriginal children who lived in proximity to the goldfields who were primarily on the minds of the CBA to remove from their families.[1064]

> On enquiry it was found that the blacks are reluctant to give up their children. They are usually very kind to their offspring, and they are jealous of any interference with them by the whites; so that, up to the present time, the Board have not removed any of the younger members; but Mr. Porteous, of Carngham, is in communication with Mr. Green respecting some of the children in his district, who can be taken away without offence to the tribe to which they belong.
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> Until an Act has be passed by the Parliament authorising the removal of half-caste girls and orphans against the wishes of those persons who may have assumed charge of them, the Central Board will not be able to use the means at their disposal for their education, nor to protect them from the perils which now surround them.[1065]

The CBA made it abundantly clear that they sought much greater power to intervene in Aboriginal peoples' lives by making 'urgent solicitations for some amendment of the laws affecting the blacks'.

[1063] In 1863 the CBA identified there were in excess of 120 Aboriginal people outside of the Honorary Correspondent's influence. Some Aboriginal people in the central Victorian goldfields were reported to be not included in the Board's population estimates. Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Third Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria (Melbourne: Victoria Parliament, 1864). pp.12-13. Reports of Aboriginal workers being ripped off by unscrupulous employers were relatively common and were another motiaving factor behind the CBA's rally for 'an Act of Parliament to provide for the management of the Aborigines.' Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fourth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. p.11

[1064] The CBA reported that the 'blacks were in the habit of visiting the towns and goldfields very frequently, where they readily procured intoxicating liquors. They were ill-clad and ill fed; their children were uncared for...' Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fourth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. p.13

[1065] Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fourth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. p.10

EVANGELISING THE ABORIGINALS

Intervention in Aboriginal peoples' lives was inextricably linked with bringing them out of 'moral degradation'. Religious humanitarianism played a significant role in the development of Aboriginal affairs in Victoria in the latter half of the nineteenth century, despite the significant impact of a static racial hierarchy on popular racial discourse. There was a degree of discord in Christian circles about the fate of Aboriginal people, with some pronouncing that 'Australian aborigines were mere beasts in human shape...and that no efforts made to evangelise the aborigines of Victoria could be successful.'[1066] Other prominent Christians considered that 'the condition of the aborigines is that of dying men' and as all men are created in God's own image, they could be "saved [from extinction and damnation] only by divine interference".[1067] Aboriginal evangelists such as a group of seven Aboriginals from the Maloga Mission, including their leader, Martin Simpson, a Djadjawurrung man echoed this refrain:

> The idea was to go out among the scattered remnants, preach the gospel and endeavour to gather them at the Mission Station. "We thought a great deal about this", says Martin Simpson, the leader of the little band of Missionaries, "and we looked very long and very earnestly to God that He would open a way for us, and that He might convert us into humble instruments for the salvation of our poor people."[1068]

These Aboriginal evangelists also witnessed to the morally degraded non-Indigenous mining community of Ballarat.

[1066] "Missios to the Chinese and Aborigines," *Argus* 11 November 1863. p.5

[1067] Rev. SL Chase, 'Faith the Antidote to Despair; or, Hope for the Aborigines. A Sermon Preached on behalf of 'The Church of England Mission to the Aborigines of Victoria'", *Victorian Pulpit*, no.iv, 1858. Cited in Anderson, "The Aboriginal Experiment: European Racial Discourse and Practice in Gippsland, Victoria, 1860-1895." p.23 Also see "Missios to the Chinese and Aborigines." p.5

[1068] "Black Evangelists," *Albury Post* November 1887.

> The Aboriginal, Martin Simpson, in addressing a large assemblage at the Alfred hall last night on behalf of the Maloga Mission, stated that since his arrival in the fine City of Ballarat, he felt sorry on finding that there were many white people unconverted to God. During the past few days he was grieved on noticing men staggering about the streets of Ballarat overcome by the effects of intoxicating drink, that firewater which had cut out of existence and sent to a premature grave so many of his (Martin Simpson's) race.[1069]

Missionaries, including Daniel, a Christian Aboriginal missionary from the Lake Hindmarsh region, firmly believed they were acting in the best interests of the Aboriginal people themselves, and that to be 'raised' in Christianity was compensation for their losses as a result of British colonization.[1070] Whilst Bain Attwood has stressed that the missionaries' imposition of a new world order upon Aboriginal people, where the barbarous and 'uncivilised aspects of Aboriginal society [were] to be repressed as part of a larger bourgeois strategy of social and cultural reform designed to reshape and control the 'other',[1071] other historians such as Richard Broome persuasively argue that Attwood 'underestimates the degree to which some Aboriginal people voluntarily embraced cultural enlargement and enrichment (not change).'[1072]

The extent of embrace and enlargement varied widely across Aboriginal Victoria. In the same period that significant numbers of Aboriginal people chose to express loyalty to 'their Queen', both symbolically and practically,[1073] there were relatively

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[1069] *Ballarat Star* December 3 1887.

[1070] In the CBA's fifth report, several instances of Aboriginal people evangelizing to others were quoted including 'Daniel lately left Lake Hindmarsh in order to proceed to the interior of Australia with some of the Moravian missionaries' and a Fred Wowinda who was observed 'reading the Testament to a black from a neighbouring station.' Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, Fifth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in Victoria. pp.8-9

[1071] Attwood, The Making of the Aborigines. p.8

[1072] Broome, Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800. p.127

[1073] An address to the Governor of Victoria was 'originated spontaneously by the natives on the Upper Yarra, and was presented in person by a deputation of fifteen blackfellows who walked forty miles to

large numbers of Aboriginal people near the goldfields who 'distrusted the good intentions of white men'[1074] and insistently chose to live independently of the missions and reserves. This disparity of attitude demonstrates that any analysis of Aboriginal response and agency requires fine brush strokes rather than broad categorizing. During the 1850s it has been demonstrated that an Aboriginal policy vacuum existed which appears to have stemmed from a perceived failure by the Colonial government during the protectorate period in their bid to coalesce, civilize and Christianise. In the absence of a pro-active Aboriginal policy by successive Victorian Governments, a number of Missionary endeavours, most notably the Moravian and Presbyterian missions to the Aborigines attempted to provide refuge and spiritual teaching. The responses of Victorian Aboriginal people to the presence of missionaries varied. Some chose to incorporate elements of Christianity into their culture; some individuals embraced Christianity as a means of personal salvation and their race's survival; some utilised the mission as a refuge and as a platform from which to launch a raft of initiatives which would provide them with greater self-determination. The missionaries were able to impart some precepts of Christianity in the face of an overwhelmingly secular gold frontier society and to provide a nexus for involvement with non-Indigenous people. The lure of the goldfields, the proximity of the goldfields shanties, readily available employment opportunities and a laissez faire culture towards Aboriginal policy ensured the failure of some missionaries' efforts. The Government and missionaries' own precepts of how to identify success, whereby

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Melbourne for that purpose...They accompanied the address with a present of native implements for the Queen, the Prince of Wales, and other members of the Royal Family..' *Argus* 27 May 1863. p.4.

[1074] The *Bendigo Advertiser* reported on the pitiful condition of a Djadjawurrung widow, preferring to stay in her own country rather than be shifted to a foreign reserve or mission: 'there are yet, however, some who, though living in a state of almost starvation, distrust the good intentions of white men. Instructions regarding this woman are being awaited from the Government.' *Bendigo Advertiser*. p.5

they would shun all vestiges of traditional culture as a body and conform totally to non-Indigenous habits, also led to some decrying their efforts as failures.

It has been demonstrated that the 1860s heralded in an era whereby the Colonial government sought to 'protect and control' Aboriginal people's lives. The catalyst for this course of action was pressure brought to bear on the Government by Aboriginal and non-Indigenous voices throughout the 1850s to improve the social and economic welfare of Aboriginal people in Victoria. The attempts of the CBA to 'protect and settle' the Victorian Aboriginal population were shown to be largely untenable in light of the disparity between the aims of the CBA, the mean and niggardly fiscal approach by the Government (which effectively ensured that no positivist approaches could possibly be placed in train) and the insatiable greed for control of land, particularly auriferous rich land. The very concept of 'protection' was approached from very different angles. The accommodative responses by Victorian Aboriginal people to the CBA's policies in the study period have been shown to be without uniformity due to the ephemeral and superficial nature of government and missionary policies and the rapidly changing physical and political nature of goldfields society. Aboriginal people responded in a range of ways to the presence of CBA appointed Guardians, particularly in auriferous regions. Traditional lifestyles were able, in the main, to be continued; voices were raised to entreat for land and other rights; physical refuge was sometimes sought; friendships and kinship ties were forged; new paradigms of living were explored and discovered; and the resources of the Guardians were exploited to advance their community.

It has also been demonstrated that the efforts of the CBA and missionaries had a degree of success in their endeavors to stand in the gap for Victorian Aboriginal

people, notwithstanding their very paternalistic attitudes and the enormous hurdles placed in their path by social, economic and political machinations in a society infected by gold fever. The Government's agents of control were in some circumstances able to intercede on their behalf, limit damaging situations and mediate between Aboriginal people and the non-Indigenous people affecting their lives. The good intentions of missionaries and the CBA were shattered by a failure of the Colonial Governments to commit adequate land and resources and to implement policy and legislation effectively to fractured Aboriginal communities they believed were becoming extinct. The escalation of self destructive behaviours amongst Aboriginal communities and increasingly urgent tenor of communication regarding the protection from self-abusive conflict floundered in conflicting messages, demands and unreal expectations. Ultimately, confusion as to what to do and a lack of political will to do much at all prevailed.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has mapped the role of Aboriginal people in relation to the gold rushes in Victoria between 1850 and 1870. It has examined the accommodative responses of Aboriginal people to the Victorian gold rushes through primary and secondary sources and reveals an emerging picture which places Aboriginal people not on the periphery of the gold epoch, but often firmly ensconced in the social and economic milieu that was the gold rush. This study is a positive (and substantive) revisionist perspective of Aboriginal people and the Victorian gold rush.

It has explored data surrounding early individualistic rushes to surface alluvial fields and small-scale shallow mining,[1075] and official Colonial records from the period 1850 to 1870 that document the role of Aboriginal people in Victoria, predominately on, but also – off, the goldfields.

The fact that gold rushes took place on Aboriginal land has been highlighted and the presence of Aboriginal people on the goldfields of Victoria has been examined in some detail. It has been shown that Victorian Aboriginal people figured significantly in the gold epoch, their involvement ranging from passive presence, active discovery, to shunning the goldfields. A great degree of Aboriginal agency has been highlighted. Just as it has been demonstrated that Aboriginal people did not passively merge into the distance during the pastoral period, this is equally true for the gold period covered by the study. The degree to which Aboriginal people did or did not participate in the

[1075] The heyday of the shallow alluvial miner was in the period 1852-5. The number of alluvial miners peaked in 1857 and declined rapidly after that. T Dickson cited in Sullivan, ed., A Toast to the Days of Gold. p.12

gold rush activities has been shown to be dependent upon a raft of cultural and economic factors such as personal relationships with non-Indigenous miners, kinship and attachments to the land where gold was to be found, and their ability to continue traditional lifestyles in the face of a very sudden and large population increase from immigrants.

In a sense I have leapt two historiographical stages with this study in one go – the first revisionist point is simply that Aboriginal people were there; the second, the more particular and nuanced arguments about what they did and what it meant for them overall. I have presented striking and consistent evidence that many Aboriginal people remained in the gold areas, participated in gold mining and interacted with non-Indigenous people in a whole range of hitherto neglected ways, whilst maintaining many of their traditional customs. Moreover, I have offered compelling evidence that the Aboriginal presence on the goldfields was a reflection of their entrepreneurial spirit and eagerness to participate in gold-mining or related activities. This is a striking revision of the 1858 Select Committee's evidence in which witness after witness from the gold areas testified that Aboriginal people had left their district, were mendicant in nature and lacked social energy.

There is no evidence to date that gold held a special significance to Aboriginal people prior to the gold rushes, though Aboriginal creation stories which place gold as a precious metal have survived, presumably post gold influences. However, there is clear evidence that the quarrying and trading of precious stone was an activity carried out prior to British colonisation, that gold was known to Aboriginal people prior to the gold rushes, and that the monetary value of gold was quickly realized and capitalized upon by Aboriginal people. The notion that to the non-Indigenous miners

of Victoria Aboriginal people were 'invisible, silent and nameless' has been shown to be fallacious. Vestiges of their physical connection with the goldfields are to be found in Aboriginal artworks of the period, archaeological sites and place names bestowed upon some mining sites which act as a testimony or as an *aide de memoire*.

Regarding work relations between Aboriginal workers and non-Indigenous gold miners in Victoria, little has been done since the work of Richard Broome. The primary documents have validated and extended earlier researchers' discussions, most notably Broome and Clark, about Aboriginal attitudes towards work and place. Though Broome's and Clark's works centered on the pastoral frontier, their findings have been shown to be equally applicable to the gold era. Certain core motivations for Aboriginal people to engage or not engage in work on the goldfields of Victoria clearly stemmed from whether their ancestral estates rested on auriferous ground and also the kinship-styled relationships that were forged between themselves and the immigrant goldseekers. For some Aboriginal people, just as for non-Indigenous people, gold seeking as a full-time occupation to the exclusion of all other duties was an anathema, and for others it was a worthwhile and productive pursuit.

The documenting of Aboriginal associations with gold mining is critical when Aboriginal communities and non-Indigenous cultural tourism operators attempt to embed Aboriginal cultural heritage into gold mining heritage tourism sites. The telling of Aboriginal history is of course political, and when Ballarat's Aboriginal community in 2005 established an Aboriginal Arts and Culture centre, with one of its major themes being Aboriginal associations with gold mining, there was a degree of unsettledness about Sovereign Hill's role in interpreting Aboriginal peoples' associations with gold any further.

Following the documentation provided throughout this time, the thesis developed theories of the significance of exoticism as well as reverse exoticism between Aboriginal people and non-Indigenous goldfield communities. It has been shown that mutual interest in each population's 'otherness' cannot be overstated. Subsequently, any interpretation of goldfields history would be remiss to position Aboriginal people out of the field of vision, as clearly Aboriginal culture and lifestyles were an integral part of the goldfields cultural experience for many non-Indigenous miners who sought to acquire a sense of uniqueness, set apart from their 'old world'. How the Victorian gold mining societies acculturated a number of Aboriginal cultural features is one of the more intriguing issues in this study that has received very little attention from historians, yet provides a nexus to reconciliation through the process of sharing histories. More research is urgently needed in the field of documenting Aboriginal experiences and memories from an Aboriginal perspective of the goldfields, as this would complement the multi-layered findings of this study.

A central argument of this study has been that a working knowledge of the dynamics of Aboriginal attachment to land tenure and kinship affiliations is necessary for an understanding of Aboriginal involvement with the gold rushes. Through a careful revision of primary documents sourced from non-Indigenous sources, the study has revealed the importance placed by Victorian Aboriginal people on maintaining links with their natal estates and assimilating non-Indigenous people into an Aboriginal cosmology. An exploration of details of inter-racial relationships revealed a complicity of involvements, with sexual, legal, moral, and mercantile arrangements being struck in configurations not recorded in mainstream generalist historical accounts of the Victorian gold rushes. Following on from Clark and Critchett, the thesis has further explored the spatial organization imperative and the 'living

together' nature of the pastoral frontier and has broadened out this aspect of inter-racial relations into the gold era.

Moreover, the large body of evidence presented in this thesis outlining Aboriginal people actively discovering and seeking gold for their own commercial gain - encompassing immigrating to foreign goldfields, independent fossicking ventures and multi-racial partnerships - has leviathan ramifications. Bates' notion of gold being a 'social energiser and definer' can now rightly be applied to Aboriginal society. For some Aboriginal people, gold seeking was consistent to a degree with core traditional values, was to some extent consistent with traditional commercial activity, and, to a point, since many goldfields were probably located where traditional quarries had existed, there was a site usage overlay. Not surprisingly, there is predominance in the historical records of select language groups (such as the Djadjawurrung) whose successful participation in laboring for gold was prodigious. Many Aboriginal people sought to find their niche in the new society, via predominately economic channels, through trading in their manufactured goods, farming, and cultural performances, or in employment roles such as bark cutting, tracking, guiding and police work, which did not inordinately compromise their cultural integrity and took advantage of their superior traditional work skills. They also sought to accommodate and manipulate the gold seekers into their social structure by continuing to recognize select non-Indigenous people as resuscitated Aboriginal people and entreating gold miners and townsfolk to practice the rudiments of Aboriginal mores. Others chose to align themselves with the goldfields as little as possible.

Gold then, for some Aboriginal people during the period under study, spelled a freedom and supplied a social energy rarely enjoyed in the pastoral period, in an

analogous manner to what non-Indigenous people experienced. This is a radical new paradigm that sets out to rudely dispel the circular history that Aboriginal people on the goldfields of Victoria were a passive remnant who knew nothing of gold, cared nothing for its existence and were willing to go 'cold and hungry' whilst accepting their oppressions and vices. In the case for Aboriginal self-determinism, this study has aligned itself with Broome's recent contribution to this complex issue. A great deal of evidence has been presented which concurs with Broome's summation that the degree to which some Aboriginal people voluntarily embraced cultural enlargement and enrichment (not change) has been underestimated in the past.

It is anticipated that future researchers undertaking finer brush strokes of the Aboriginal history canvas shall substantiate this view point and also highlight the continuation of Aboriginal traditional society despite the destructive encroachment of goldfields.

It has not been within the parameters of this study to examine in detail Sino-Aboriginal, Maori-Aboriginal, or sexual race relations (and the off-spring of these relationships) on the Victorian goldfields, but on appearances it would seem this is a rich area for further research which would tell us more about these largely unexplored and fascinating topics.

A fundamental motivation of this study was the delineation of Victoria's gold mining history in Aboriginal terms. In terms of a generalist approach, the goal has been realised, but much more needs to be done in terms of micro studies or specific language groups' associations with gold mining. An annotated bibliography of Aboriginal associations with gold mining in Victoria, language group by language group is clearly needed in Victoria. That record would contain at least three

categories: local newspaper reports; family histories and manuscripts pertaining to Aboriginal people. Now that Aboriginal peoples' general association with gold mining has been established, it is necessary to take another step and compile biographies (where possible) and language group snapshots. Many Aboriginal people are deeply interested in their personal or community's connection to the goldfields story, and the construction of a bibliography for this period would be an invaluable tool for goldfields heritage research. Moreover, there is the opportunity to showcase the critical role Aboriginal people played off the goldfields and to finally elevate Victorian Aboriginal bush workers into the pantheon of 'The Australian Legend'.

Whatever knowledge of the colonisers prior to the 1850s Victorian Aboriginal people had obtained and used to make adaptive and adoptive choices, it did not protect them from the sudden onslaught of gold mining and the gargantuan social and environmental repercussions. Aboriginal people were acutely aware of the losses they had suffered and of the niggardly policies of colonial governments. There are a number of direct comparisons that will naturally be drawn between some characteristics of the miserly interventionist Aboriginal policies of 1860-70 and present day issues. Points of comparison might include: social changes initiated by Aboriginal people, long term strategic planning, clear review processes, identification of relevant stakeholders, negotiation with disparate language groups, and the importance of consultation and the valuing of Aboriginal heritage. In the process of outlining both the laissez faire and interventionist policies which directly impacted on Aboriginal people in the period 1850-70, an attempt has been made to underscore the degree which Aboriginal people labored to remain autonomous.

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